25TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

The Washington Monthly

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John Kenneth Galbraith on the elite's dirty little secret

Walter Shapiro on Dan Quayle

The Hill staffers calling the shots on health care reform

Harold Ickes, Jr. and the mob

A Club of Their Own

How the C.I.A. gave us Aldrich Ames

James Fallows on what Bob Woodward didn't tell you about Clinton

The Menendez Hustle:

How to keep juries from getting conned

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MARY HARRIS "MOTHER" JONES

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The Washington Monthly

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Letters

Bloom Counting

The quotation you mention ["Tilting at Windmills," June] is from Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, Act IV, Scene 3. Perdita is speaking:

> . . . daffodils that come before the swallow dares, and take the winds of March with beauty. . .

As regarding all the flowers blooming at once this year, I think it is because we've had the hardest winter in decades. This keeps early bloomers from flowering, and the late bloomers then *seem* early.

Margaret Ann Sullivan
Stonybrook, NY

Meetingless Waste

I believe you put the cart before the horse when you suggested that the greatest reform Al Gore could make would be to cut the number of meetings in government in half ["Tilting at Windmills," June]. Meetings are a necessary holding pen when you have too many people in search of a function. The way to cut down on meetings is to reduce agency personnel to the point where each employee has a job to do and doesn't have to fill his idle hours by attending pointless meetings. Young agencies, as you noted, don't have that problem. That's because, unlike older agencies, they have not, year after year, been adding new layers of personnel.

Leonard Reed
Chevy Chase, MD

Et Tu, *Monthly*

While I am not (to put it mildly) a fan of Tom Bethell, the fact remains that in the April *Monthly*—as well as in his companion piece in the January 1994 *American Spectator*—he makes an uncomfortably strong case for major restrictions on the voting rights of government transfer-payment recipients. What do the *Monthly*'s liberal staffers think of this?

Bruce Moomaw
Cameron Park, CA

The editors reply: We agree with Bethell if the disenfranchisement applies to all subsidies, from Social Security (beyond the return of your contribution plus interest) to the home mortgage interest deduction to rich sugar farmers who get price supports they don't really need. Of course, we realize that if this reform were implemented, it would leave about 12 eligible voters in the country. The point of Bethell's piece—and our point—is that it's time for all of us to think about giving up our little tax breaks and special advantages for the common good.

Board Stiffs

In regard to your comments about medical licensing boards ["Tilting at Windmills," May], you may be interested to learn that the Oregon Board of Medical Examiners has had a lay member on its board since 1979 and two lay members since 1989. We also have two osteopathic physicians on the board.

I am told that among the 50 states, the Oregon Board of Medical Examiners has an outstanding reputation for its discipline of errant physicians. However, I also understand that the board would be more aggressive except for the reluctance of its lawyer to pursue some cases where there may be a question of lawsuit, the costs of which could be considerable.

A recent survey done by the American Academy of Family Physicians, in which the member physicians were asked their five most important concerns, found that the number one concern is malpractice suits. This result supports your remark concerning malpractice litigation in this country.

The reasons for the high cost of health care in the United States are multiple and I have yet to see some of them addressed. Surely any politician who hopes to be reelected would not care to bring up these reasons.

Joan K. Tanner, M.D.
Portland, OR

Cattle Prod

Christopher Georges' article in May ["Get Smart About Inflation"] made the whole magazine worth the price of admission. After some 40 years as a newspaper and magazine editor, I still don't understand why reporters fail to ask the questions that challenge conventional wisdom. Georges raises them.

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People forget what happened in the big oil inflation of recent history. Stocks fluctuated. Then they went up markedly and generally stayed up. People who fear inflation turn to stocks because theoretically they represent real values—machinery, real estate, buildings, productive capacity, etc.—if their prices are anywhere near true worth. If we have inflation, sounds like stocks will rise.

I also liked Jon Meacham's piece ["Think Little Rock Is Corrupting Washington? *C'mon*"]. Washington corruption is plotted and planned sleaze, aiming cynically at taking down big bucks. The Southern variety is more casual and usually does not attack the public purse, as does Washington's. Example: Can't you imagine some of the moneyed characters in Little Rock sitting around a late afternoon table? One says, "We gotta do something for Bill. The boy's got a great future, but he's broke. Can't we put him on some legitimate money?" Another says, "Well, cattle futures look hot to me," or, "We can let him in on the Whitewater development and cut him a share at the original investor's price." The conversation might well have included no profit but friendship for the benefactors.

Seems a lot cleaner to me than taking an enormous fee for wrecking a small country or leaning on the citizenry to maintain an artificial price level for a giant industry.

Sylvan Meyer
Washington, DC

AID This

Stryk Thomas' article on USAID ["Milkshakes in the African Desert," May] brought back memories of my experiences with that agency during 13 years as a foreign correspondent in Haiti.

During Jean-Claude (Baby Doc) Duvalier's regime, tons of food ostensibly for distribution to the hungry of Haiti poured in from various humanitarian sources. The prime distributor of this food was USAID. In covering this story, I frequently went to the commercial dock in Port-au-Prince and watched freighters unloading 100-pound sacks of rice in huge cargo nets. I looked in vain for any American USAID officials who should have been on the scene supervising the loading of the rice sacks onto private trucks, which were to take the rice to storage facilities in various rural areas. The docks were hot, noisy, and dusty. The air-conditioned offices of USAID were much more comfortable, thus the off-loading was delegated to Haitian government officials and soldiers. This was most interesting to observe.

Hundreds of Haitian women were on the dock with sacks, buckets, and other containers. When the ship cranes swung the cargo nets loaded with hundreds of sacks of rice over the side, they would be lowered until they were about 20 feet above the dock, at which time the entire net would be abruptly dropped. Many of the sacks burst open, spewing rice all over the ground. A Haitian soldier collected money from the women who then proceeded to fill their containers. Most of the rice ended up being sold in the native market in Port-au-Prince. The trucks, each with an armed soldier or two sitting on the rice sacks, left for the country's distribution points. As the trucks went through villages and towns en route to their destination, the soldiers would throw off several sacks of rice to waiting merchants for pre-arranged fees. When the trucks arrived at their storage deposits, they contained nine or 10 sacks out of the 70 or 80 they received on the dock. From this off-loading to the final destination, no American USAID official was visible!

Arthur B. Candell
Silver Springs, FL

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Tilting at Windmills

From our What Politicians Should Never Do department comes this report about a California city councilman, Vic Monia, who is in a hotly contested race for reelection. Driving up to a meeting hall full of voters, Monia decided to park his car in a space reserved for the handicapped. And the car was not an inconspicuous Ford or Chevy. It was a Jaguar, and a red one at that, readily identifiable by his constituents as they left the meeting. . . .

The largest single project item in the fiscal year 1995 budget, the one Congress is currently considering, is the new nuclear-powered aircraft carrier that would cost $5 billion, 3.6 of which would come from '95 funds. The argument for the carrier is based on the theory that we need 12 carriers. But what conceivable military situation could develop that would require that many carriers? Study the evidence from the Gulf War and you'll realize how small a role they played in the only major conflict in which we have been involved in the last 20 years. The real reason for the carrier is that each requires a large group of supporting ships that creates what is called a "flag command," meaning a job for an admiral. And finding suitable slots for admirals is one of the main unstated goals of the United States Navy. Two senators, Patrick Leahy of Vermont and Russell Feingold of Wisconsin, are, according to *Congressional Quarterly*, "questioning the need for the carrier and considering measures to block it." Why not encourage them with a letter? . . .

I am not at all certain that Hubert Humphrey, if he were still alive, would have mourned the deaths of Richard Nixon and Jacqueline Kennedy, as most Americans seem to. Actually, Humphrey was such a generous man that he might still have grieved sincerely, but there is no question that he would have been justified in holding a grudge against both of them. After all, they cost him the election in 1968.

In Nixon's case, I don't refer to the fact that he defeated Humphrey but to the fact that he did so with a dirty trick. He had Madame Anna Chennault, a Chinese woman who married an American general and became prominent in conservative Amerasian circles, arrange to have the South Vietnamese sabotage the Paris peace talks that they were carrying on with the U.S. and the North Vietnamese. This was done just as Humphrey, who had made an incredible comeback since the disastrous Chicago convention and the riots in the streets that accompanied it, had pulled even with Nixon in the polls in late October.

One important factor in his climb had been growing optimism about the prospects for peace in Vietnam that was inspired by progress in Paris. The Republicans saw an opportunity to turn this plus for Humphrey into a mortal blow to his hopes by getting Thieu, the South Vietnamese president, to issue an angry statement that made clear he was not going to go along with the agreement that, ironically, was essentially the same deal the Nixon administration made with the enemy four years later. In the interim, 15,316 American soldiers were killed and 111,016 were wounded.

As for Jacqueline Kennedy, her contribution to Humphrey's defeat was her marriage to Aristotle Onassis in October. Humphrey was planning an election eve broadcast that would place the magic mantle of Camelot on his shoulders by showing him walking on a beach talking to the pre-Chappaquidick Ted Kennedy. A good part of that magic vanished on the day Mrs. Kennedy married Mr. Onassis. When Robert Kennedy was alive, he told Jackie, when she mentioned that she and Onassis were getting serious, that this wedding would cost him 500,000 votes. It seems safe to assume that the event proved equally expensive for Hubert Humphrey. . . .

If you're now in the mood for bizarre electoral theories—or at least are willing to indulge one more—I have still another explanation for the Nixon victory in 1968. It was Tricia and Julie. This attractive young pair, the casual observer felt, could not possibly belong to the family of a crook. And the Nixon forces saw to it that the daughters were on television repeatedly during the 1968 Republican

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convention, particularly when they were joined by Julie's fiancé, David Eisenhower, who not only looked like a nice fellow but who carried with him the implied endorsement of Nixon by David's grandfather, who, to put it gently, had not been considered to be among his former vice president's most ardent boosters. . . .

One requirement for membership in The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America is an ancestor who lived in an American colony before 1750. The society is cracking down on those who try to slip through the door with dubious forebears. The Spring 1994 issue of *Dames Dispatch*, the society's newsletter, contains a list of ancestors who no longer make the cut. Some of the judgments are harsh indeed. Pity the plight of descendants of such now disqualified close cases as Benjamin Reynolds, born January 4, 1750, and Hugh Giles, born January 13, 1750. On the other hand, the descendants of William Oliphant have been getting away with murder and clearly deserve disqualification. The Dames have learned he wasn't born until 1850. . . .

I learned something about the psychology of the elderly this spring. I was invited to speak at the 45th reunion of my class at Columbia. I arrived at the building where I was scheduled to speak; I saw a group that looked my age and joined them. After several minutes of pleasant conversation, I asked about when I was to speak. They said, "What speech?" They, it seemed, belonged to the class of 1969. My 1949 class was meeting down the hall. I realized then that I need to change that 40-watt bulb over my bathroom mirror.

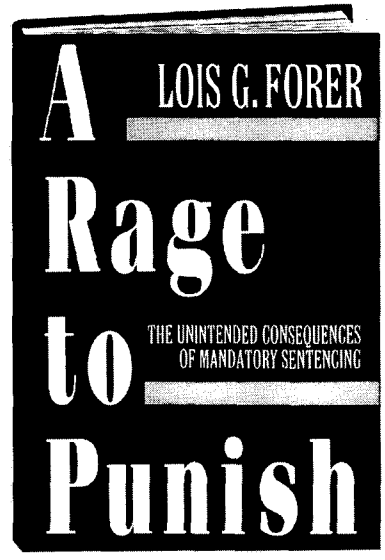
On a more serious note, I was troubled to learn that one of Columbia's greatest traditions—its core curriculum—belongs on the list of endangered species. One of the beauties of the curriculum was that the courses were taught by great teachers—the Mark Van Dorens and the Lionel Trillings. Now, they are taught by young instructors. The reason is that senior professors don't want to teach, or don't want to teach introductory courses, or don't want to teach interdisciplinary courses that take them away from their cherished specialties. They should all be required to read a book called *Teacher in America* that Jacques Barzun wrote in 1945. It will explain to them why they're being stupid and selfish. In fact, the book should be required for every professor in every university, because the problems at Columbia exist throughout American higher education. . . .

The uncertainty of the Clinton administration on national security matters may be explained by a recent study of senior White House officials conducted by John Wheeler, a Vietnam veteran and West Point graduate. He found only seven of 66 men in top positions had served in the military. . . .

Buried in a long *Washington Post* story about au pairs was this troubling insight from Ann Dotson, a coordinator for Au Pair Homestay, about the plight of children in a two-career family:

"The au pairs come here expecting a warm, fuzzy family experience. What they find is a situation where you have two attorneys, and they're never home by 10, and the au pair has responsibility for some very needy children."

People who work in elementary schools tell me that their most depressing and desperate moments come when they are trying to persuade parents to come pick up a sick child. The typical response, when the school employee finally suc-



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RANDOM HOUSE

ceeds in getting the first parent out of a meeting and on the phone, is that the other parent should be called. . . .

Watching a May interview on the "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour," I was astonished by the unusual candor of HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros' description of the homeless. Instead of handing out the usual liberal line that the homeless are victims of economic conditions and a shortage of housing, he said that a third of them are mentally ill and another third are substance abusers. In other words, most of the homeless don't need another housing project—they need treatment. For some this will require reinstitutionalization. But in many cases, effective treatment can be given on an outpatient basis, often with drugs. The catch is that they don't admit to themselves that they need treatment when they need it. This means there has to be some kind of compulsion in picking them up and administering the drugs. This is why liberals have consistently opted for the housing solution to the homeless problem: They simply don't want to face the need for the seemingly illiberal solution that compulsion constitutes.

But if the liberals want to be truly humane and actually help the homeless resume normal life, the need for mandatory treatment must be confronted. The way to do it is instead of judges making institutional commitments, they should order outpatient commitment, which would allow the mentally ill their freedom so long as they regularly came in for treatment. If they fail to appear, they would be picked up, taken to a clinic, and given the appropriate treatment. . . .

When the Clinton administration ordered Japan to guarantee increases in imports of American goods, Japanese officials righteously refused because they say that would constitute interference with the free market. Yet as James Sterngold of *The New York Times* recently pointed out, "The Japanese government has engaged in one of the heaviest waves of market intervention in memory in an attempt to manage the value of the yen and keep Japan's exports flowing."

I have been amused—sometimes maddened—by a similar hypocrisy among American conservatives who proclaim their eternal devotion to the free market while demanding that the Federal Reserve intervene in that market to protect their bonds. . . .

A couple of months ago, I wrote about how state legislatures procrastinate, postponing much of their business until the final day of session. In a single day in 1991 the Rhode Island legislature passed 122 bills, some more than 30 pages long. In case you didn't know, the United States Supreme Court is guilty of a similar offense. On the first of June, of the 84 cases on the 1993-94 term, 36 were undecided. "It is truly a sweatshop at the Supreme Court in June," one clerk told *The Washington Post*'s Joan Biskupic. "Everyone at the court dreads the inevitable memo that comes around from Chief Justice [William H.] Rehnquist saying it's time to stop dillydallying."

It's interesting to note that the justices continue to run late even though their caseload has been cut in half since the mid-1980s, meaning that reducing workload has no impact on the tendency to procrastinate. It's also interesting that June opinions, because they are often rushed, are often less sound than others. The joke among lawyers, observes Biskupic, is "that if an opinion is especially difficult to follow, it must be a June.". . .

Back for a moment to the sins of higher education. The latest example of one of the worst and most

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widespread abuses comes from the *Charleston Gazette,* which reports that from 1972 to 1992 the number of administrators at West Virginia State College shot up twice as fast as the number of students, and the number of faculty dropped 10 percent. That the problem is not unique to West Virginia is suggested by the fact that nationally in the 1980s, while faculty has increased by 6 percent, administration grew by 45 percent.

When alumni gather for reunions, in the midst of the fun and fellowship I hope they'll devote an hour or two to putting the heat on teachers to teach and on administrators to de-proliferate. And why not make alumni gifts conditional on these reforms?. . .

Some years back there was a study that showed that during the 1970s, cabinet appointees at the assistant secretary level had been turning over at a rate of one every two years. The situation hasn't gotten much better since then, according to a recent report from the General Accounting Office, despite the fact that the Reagan-Bush years provided an opportunity for greater continuity. During just one 18-month period in 1991-92, three different persons served as assistant secretary for post-secondary education. At the Commerce Department, there were seven different assistant secretaries for trade development from 1981 to 1991. Obviously, these people don't serve long enough to learn the ropes. Contrast them with Franklin Roosevelt, who served for eight years as assistant secretary of the Navy. It is no accident that the most effective president of the 20th century is the only one to have served long enough in the executive branch to understand its ways. . . .

The California legislature, already one of the most generously compensated in the nation, recently handed itself a $20,000 raise, meaning that members will now receive $72,000 in salary plus an expense account of $21,000. What has the legislature done to earn this windfall? At least 11 of its members and aides have been convicted of corruption since 1989.

One aide testified that her job consisted entirely of extracting bribes from people who wanted Republican help in the legislature. But it would be unfair to say that the members were devoid of a sense of equity and fair play. Democrats demanded that they be paid as much in bribes as the Republicans were getting. And the Republicans were similarly outraged when the Democrats got payments that were not also made to them.

Legislative corruption has been so pervasive in Sacramento that, according to the *San Jose Mercury News*' Gary Webb, "standardized code words" have been developed.

A "player" is someone who makes or takes bribes. "Help" means the bribe and "someone who has been helpful" is the payer of the bribe. "Play the middle" describes the negotiation carried on by the legislative staff member who actually makes the deal. Even Miss Manners would be impressed by the standards of etiquette that are observed. It is considered unforgivably vulgar for a lobbyist to discuss the bribe with a legislator. The deals are to be made by staff members.

It works this way: The lobbyist is ushered into the legislator's office where he makes his case. The legislator listens respectfully to the lobbyist, who then goes to the staff member's office where the deal is consummated. One FBI agent nearly blew a sting operation when he asked an assemblyman if his $2,500 check was "big enough." The assemblyman was immediately suspicious and his aide told the agent, "Our members will not talk about money and legislation in the same breath. Don't ever try it.". . .

If you have doubted our repeated assertions that the Washington establishment is indifferent or hostile to health reform because its members are already well-insured and don't want to risk reform that would produce a better deal for the majority but a lesser one for them, please ponder these words from *The Washington Post*'s "Federal Diary" column written by Mike Causey, the most authoritative spokesman for Washington's civil servants:

"[Rostenkowski's] legal battles could slow the progress of the president's health plan. That would be bad for advocates of national reform, but it would be good news for most federal workers.". . .

The lesson I try to teach young journalists that they find hardest to swallow is that they should devote a few years to acquiring experience in the area they are to cover. If you plan to cover Washington, for example, work for a while in a government agency and learn what it's really like and what the problems are.

In making the case I'm handicapped by the fact that so few journalists have done what I have recommended, which means I don't have a lot of models to cite.

I'm delighted, therefore, to call attention to the item called "A Little Class" in the June 6 *New Yorker*. It describes the incredible fact that New York City has enough public school teachers to provide a student-teacher ratio of 16 to 1, even though the actual ratio is nearly 30 to 1. The article explains that this happens because there are so many teachers in what are called "out-of-classroom" positions. There is devastating inside detail about how teachers are wasted, even "yanked out of their programs to box or unbox books, to attend meetings. . . more than a few are ensconced in the district or central office and never see the inside of a school."

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The article, though unsigned, was clearly written by someone who knows what he or she is talking about. It contains details that can only be gained from firsthand experience—enough detail to give reformers evidence on which to base proposals for improvement. This is the kind of journalism that can ultimately make government better. And it can only be written by those who know what they're talking about. . . .

As one grows older, the case for optimism becomes harder to make. But a recent front page story in *The New York Times* reminded me that we should never lose hope, that things can get better. It was about the dramatic decrease in drunk driving. That change is no accident. It happened because a lot of people worked very hard to make it happen. But it happened.

My favorite example of how prayers can be answered is, as veteran readers know, what happened to anti-Catholic prejudice in America. It went from vicious in 1960 to practically non-existent in 1963, because of the incredible combined impact of John Kennedy and Pope John XXIII.

Even where, instead of answered prayers, we see the reverse, as in the case of the Chicago post office scandal described in this issue, we should remember that the institution can work because it did so at least through the thirties, forties, and fifties, meaning it can be made to work again.

But it is harder to make progress using existing institutions. With the post office, so much union and management stupidity has become the accepted way of doing things that change for the better will not come easily.

This leads me to some advice for Bill Clinton. If you want important tasks to be done well, establish new institutions to perform them. Something as important as health reform should not be entrusted to existing organizations if you can avoid it. From the CCC and the WPA in the thirties, to the OPA in the forties, to NASA and the Peace Corps in the sixties, new organizations have brought vitality to important missions.

And where Clinton can't get away with establishing new organizations, he should take a look at what the military did during World War II. We had to use the old Army and Navy. But we brought in a vast amount of fresh talent—people who had no interest in permanent military careers—at all levels. They brought a focus on the mission objective and a freedom from bureaucratic rigidity that won the war. Instead of worrying about promotions and perks, the new guys just wanted to get the job done and go home. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

The Man, the Myth, the Life

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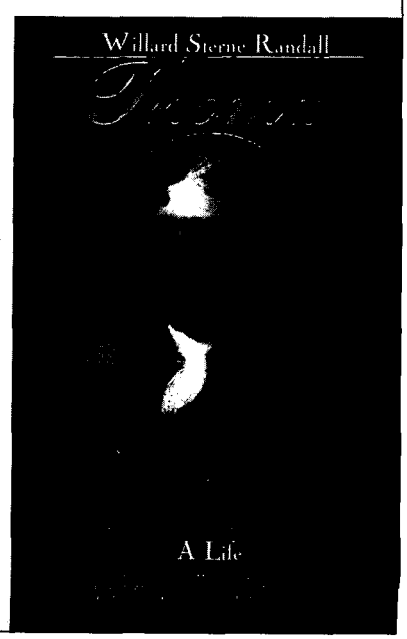

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The Mob and the Deputy Chief of Staff

Meet the White House's Harold Ickes: Longtime Democratic insider and counsel to a mafia-infested union

BY WILLIAM McGOWAN

Back in January 1993, after serving as deputy director of the transition in Little Rock, Harold Ickes, Jr., a near-legendary figure in the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, seemed a sure bet for the powerful job of deputy White House chief of staff. But then disturbing allegations surfaced: that Ickes knew about mob infiltration of a labor union he represented as a lawyer in New York, and that he had lied to a federal grand jury in connection with a stock transfer deal involving then-Mayor David Dinkins. In light of the reports, Ickes was forced to withdraw his name. The loss deprived the White House of what its stumbling first year revealed it needed the most: an advisor with deft political antennae who could work closely with both Hillary and Bill Clinton and show the neophytes around them what brass-knuckled politicking was all about.

By January of this year, however, Ickes was brought back from the political grave and given the job he had just missed when the administration opened. Once back on the team, he was to have spent the bulk of his time on the health care initiative. But given his reputation for toughness and for leadership, it wasn't long before Ickes became the point man for Whitewater. "He has the experience of the rough and tumble of New York politics. I just couldn't ask for a better colleague," said Mack McLarty, who put Ickes onto the Whitewater case just a few hours after he walked through the door. Ickes has "the experience of political damage control," noted George Stephanopolous. "That is his ball game."

As last spring's headlines revealed, however, Ickes quickly fumbled. By March, just 10 weeks into his new job, he had been subpoenaed to testify before the grand jury on his knowledge of Roger Altman's so-called heads up briefings about the RTC investigation into Madison Guaranty. He was also in the doghouse over a phone call he and Stephanopoulos made to Altman to get former Washington U.S. Attorney and Clinton detractor Jay Stephens fired as an RTC lawyer.

Such missteps could be explained as bad luck. But those familiar with Ickes' track record in New

William McGowan is a journalist and author in New York.

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York—many of whom would not go on the record, citing Ickes' reputation for vindictiveness and his formidable powers as deputy chief of staff—were not surprised that he had put himself in a position where he could be charged with obstruction of justice. Although he was cleared of criminal wrongdoing before Clinton brought him back to Washington, Ickes left behind a string of murky controversies in New York.

The good news about Harold Ickes is that he is skilled and has a sense of history and realism missing in the greenhorns who dominate the White House staff. At 54, he is older than most of the staff, too, and unlike Mack the Nice McLarty he is the kind of heavy who doesn't mind cracking the whip or saying no to powerful people. Ickes' storied career in liberal politics adds to his gravitas. Ethical difficulties notwithstanding, he is seen by many as the last of the great crusaders, a prince of the left who has never sacrificed principles for political expediency, remaining true to liberal ideals through the wilderness years when the Democrats were out of national power.

The bad news is that an examination of his record as a New York labor lawyer and a leading Democrat suggests a proclivity for stonewalling and a dread of full disclosure that could be dangerous for the Clintons. The trail Ickes left in New York weaves through the same territory of half-truths, dodges, unsavory associations, and seedy appearances that Whitewater does. His career is strewn with questionable moves that may not have broken laws yet certainly stretched the outside of the envelope of propriety—bad enough for any administration, but worse for one that promised the highest ethical standards.

During the years Ickes developed a reputation and a cult following for his devotion to causes and candidates of the left, he also developed a colorful personal style. Unlike many of his comrades who disdained hand-to-hand politicking and the nitty-gritty of the smoke-filled room, Ickes reveled in it. Hardly the "lightweight weenie" that Roger Ailes called him during the 1989 Dinkins-Giuliani New York mayoral contest, Ickes is of the old school, with one of the most extensive vocabularies of expletives in politics and a taste for confrontation. During Herman Badillo's 1973 bid for the New York mayoralty, for example, Ickes got into a brawl with a fellow campaign aide and bit the leg of a third aide who tried to break it up. He can conduct himself like a blue-chip lawyer and his friends and many in the press swear he is an affable charmer at heart. But he has been known to explode into screaming fits, which his intense blue eyes and unkempt hair only make more maniacal. Some say this wildman reputation is carefully cultivated to give him an aura of danger he uses to his advantage. Others say it is a function of his narcolepsy and the medication he takes for it.

Ickes' career, which has been likened to "a Baedeker to the liberal politics of the last 30 years," has distinguished origins. Son of Harold M. Ickes, FDR's highly regarded secretary of interior, Ickes Jr. was 12 when his father died in 1953. Dismayed at the way her friends in official Washington dropped her once she no longer represented access to power, Ickes' mother moved the family to a farm in Maryland horse country, although Harold attended Sidwell Friends School in Washington—the same place where Chelsea Clinton now preps. Choosing to go West instead of Ivy League, Ickes graduated from Stanford in 1964. He went to Mississippi that summer as part of the drive to increase black voter registration. There he was beaten so badly by a gang of whites that he lost a kidney.

At the 1964 National Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, he was part of an effort mounted by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee to force integration of all future Democratic delegations from Mississippi. After returning to New York to attend Columbia Law School, he co-chaired the New York delegation for Eugene McCarthy at the 1968 convention, and then went on to work for Birch Bayh, Morris Udall, Ted Kennedy, and Jesse Jackson.

Ickes also practiced labor law, in emulation of a man he has called his "hero," Joe Rauh. His mentor was Jack English, a Long Island Democratic Party chairman and Kennedy family loyalist whom Ickes met during the 1968 presidential campaign. In 1977, Ickes joined the Long Island labor law firm of Meyer, Suozzi, English and Klein.

With such notable New York political figures as English, and former Suffolk County Democratic chairmen John Klein and Basil Patterson, the firm of Meyer, Suozzi was a political powerhouse in the state. Such horsepower attracted

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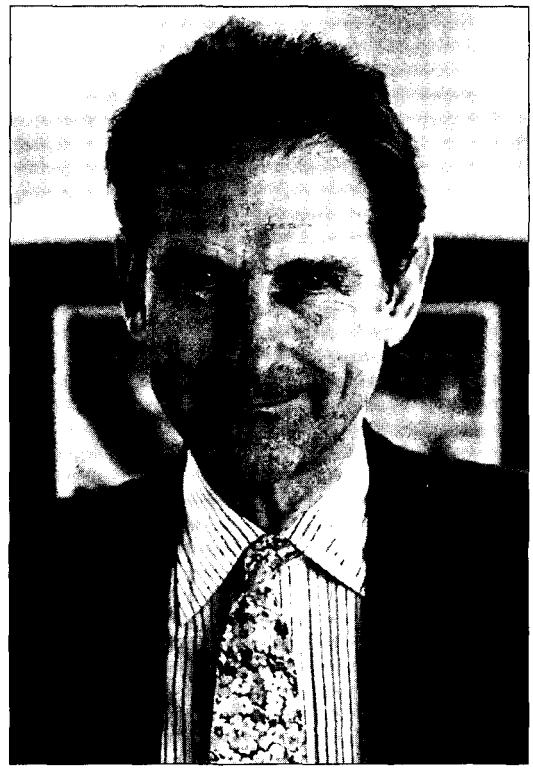
some dubious clients, however, many of them corrupt labor unions, leading some of its opponents to jokingly refer to it as "The Firm." "They may not be at the level of Armand D'Amato," says one former New York prosecutor, referring to the Long Island influence peddler and brother of Senator Al, "but they are not far behind."

One of the Democrats Ickes stayed close to as he worked at Meyer, Suozzi was Bill Clinton. An FOB since their days at Project Pursestrings, an antiwar organization in Washington, Ickes stayed in touch with the Clintons through the seventies, frequently having dinner with them and his former girlfriend Susan Thomases (another politically influential New York lawyer) when the Clintons came to New York. After serving as special counsel to the Democratic National Committee during Ron Brown's tenure as chairman, Ickes jumped into a leadership vacuum in New York state to manage the 1992 Democratic primary for the Arkansas governor. Coming on the heels of Jerry Brown's upset win in Connecticut, New York was crucial for Clinton. Ickes used his network of personal relationships to keep a fragile coalition of feminists, labor leaders, and liberals together in the face of concern over Gennifer Flowers' still-lingering charges of marital infidelity.



Harold Ickes

Ickes delivered more yeoman service to Clinton by managing the Democratic National Convention in New York that summer, taking great pains to handle the prickly egos of influential Democrats seeking the spotlight. Although he was self-effacing, he was not unsung. Ickes, said Clinton the day after the convention, "was one person without whom I might not be here."

After the election, Ickes went to Little Rock, where he played his pivotal role as deputy director of the transition. During this time he told friends his position as deputy chief of the White House staff was "a done deal." But after a week of negative press reports in January about Ickes' unsavory clientele and his role in the Dinkins stock transfer, the deal unraveled. With problems over Zoë Baird's nomination to be attorney general and allegations about Ron Brown's questionable ethics, Clinton could little afford the embarrassment. On the night of January 13, 1993, Clinton had an anguished meeting with Ickes in Little Rock. The next day Ickes officially withdrew his name from consideration.

Ickes' greatest liability was his work on behalf of Local 100, his chief client from 1983 to 1991. Local 100—part of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers International, which represents employees at such well-known New York restaurants as Sardi's and Tavern on the Green—has long been reputed to be under the control of the Gambino crime family. In fact, the union was put under federal trusteeship in 1992 after the government charged it with links to the mafia. And according to news reports, federal investigators caught Paul Castellano, head of the family, on tape saying that Local 100 "was my union and I don't want anything to happen to it."

But in November 1993, former Wedtech prosecutor Mary Shannon Little, who was investigating Local 100 as part of a federal action against the union, released a brief statement. "Based on the evidence available to date," said Ms. Little, "there is no evidence of criminal misconduct on the part of Harold Ickes or Meyer, Suozzi." The firm claimed Little's two-line statement was a

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full exoneration, and it was sufficient to clear the way for Ickes' return to the White House.

The Trouble with Harold

Those familiar with Ickes' work with Local 100, however, found Shannon Little's terse and tepid statement unsatisfactory. Even though Ickes may not have been in bed with a mobbed-up union à la John Gotti's lawyer Bruce Cutler, it's hard to believe his claims that he didn't know about the union's mafia associations and equally hard to understand why he continued to represent it. According to Michael Maroney, a former senior investigator for the Department of Labor, Ickes was present during an official government interview in 1985 when Anthony "Chickie" Amodeo, the union's president before being forced to step down under the terms of a 1992 federal consent decree, admitted that he had known Castellano, then head of the Gambino crime family, for more than 40 years. Later, Ickes was informed by investigators that his client was electronically recorded talking to Castellano as part of a federal probe into organized crime activities. "He certainly knew that the union was controlled by organized crime," says Maroney.

Another wake-up call could have come in 1986, during the successful racketeering trial of union vice president John DeRoss, who was identified publicly throughout the trial as a captain in the Gambino family. In court testimony widely covered in the press at that time, DeRoss and Castellano were caught on tape having a discussion over drinks at a Manhattan steakhouse that presiding Judge John Keenan characterized as involving "the splitting of payoffs and respective jurisdiction over certain unions and payoffs."

But instead of advising the union that DeRoss should be suspended pending the outcome of the indictment, Ickes urged that DeRoss be removed from his union post only after DeRoss was convicted. This, Ickes' critics claim, demonstrated a "see no evil" mentality at odds with the code of ethics embraced by the AFL-CIO. "Ickes should have advised the executive board that they had a duty to investigate public allegations that John DeRoss was a mafia capo, that there were associations with organized crime," says one labor attorney. "As elected union officials they have an obligation to investigate and remove people who are corrupt and inimical to the labor movement. If there was an article in the paper saying DeRoss was a capo, they should have investigated him. They should have done all this before, not after."

There were still more indications that the union might have been steeped in mafiosi, not least of which was the number of union officers who had mob-related felony records. There were, in fact, so many with mob ties that honest union locals trying to pry members away from Local 100 circulated FBI-style "Wanted" sheets within Local 100 shops, again illustrating the wide availability of information that Ickes must have ignored. Pointing to the convictions of Chickie Amodeo, John DeRoss, and the felony records of other Local 100 officials and business agents, David Wright, a New York labor lawyer, says: "It is inconceivable to me that a lawyer in Mr. Ickes position would not have known that his client was involved in some level of corruption."

Finally, there was the harsh language of the 1992 federal RICO complaint against the union, which under the terms of a consent decree banned Chickie Amodeo for life and put the local into the hands of federal trustees. "Since the creation of Local 100 in 1983, the officers of Local 100 have abused (their) trust and power and have worked with organized crime to reap enormous profits at the expense of the union membership," the complaint alleged. "They have converted collective bargaining agreements into tools of extortion. They have failed to enforce union members' rights. . . the union has defrauded, its members have been deprived of their rights, and membership in Local 100 has fallen from 25,000 to 5,000."

When I questioned him about his work with Local 100, Ickes fell back on an old labor lawyer saw, pointing out that not all clients are saints. "Lawyers typically represent people who are in trouble," he says. "It is the nature of the business." As for the consent decree that forever bars Chickie Amodeo and other union officers from further union work, Ickes quickly points out that the agreement had a "non-admissions clause" which effectively means that Amodeo and the union acknowledged no crimes. Ickes says he may have been aware of *allegations* of the union's ties to organized crime and the violations of labor law these ties were said to have encouraged. But he steadfastly rejects claims that he

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was aware of any illegality or any links between the mob and the union hierarchy. "The union had been heavily investigated over the years by the elites of law enforcement," he says, "and no charges were brought against it in the years we represented them."

But there is, of course, absolutely nothing in the canons of legal ethics that requires an attorney to represent a crooked labor union. And judging from his performance with cases he handled on behalf of individual members of Local 100, it seems unlikely that Ickes was in it to help the rank and file. As their counsel, Ickes was supposed to take on discrimination and wrongful dismissal cases, pushing those with the most merit before the National Labor Relations Board. According to most attorneys and arbitrators who came up against him in his work before the NLRB, Ickes was a tenacious advocate with such an effective command of the law that opposing attorneys often wilted.

Pointing to the convictions of Chickie Amodeo, John DeRoss, and the felony records of other Local 100 officials and business agents, David Wright, a New York labor lawyer, says, "It is inconceivable to me that a lawyer in Mr. Ickes' position would not have known that his client was involved in some level of corruption."

Nevertheless, there were a number of grievance cases Ickes decided not to pursue. Some of them involved the same restaurants that prosecutors have said paid off Local 100 so management could ignore collective bargaining agreements in the union contract, essentially purchasing union inaction at the expense of workers rights. According to David Wright, a New York labor lawyer who has opposed Ickes and restaurant management in court on behalf of these workers, Ickes was "the worst enemy of hundreds of restaurant workers in New York."

Ickes says that these workers had "very easy" recourse to the NLRB complaint process, and did not even need a lawyer to do so, although many familiar with the NLRB's budget-strapped realities say this is not so. As for critics like David Wright, who pursued the cases that Ickes would not, Ickes says: "Wright has an economic interest in this. He made a lot of money (on these cases). I am not going to get into a fight with David Wright."

Only slightly less troubling is Ickes' alleged role in covering up a stock transfer deal on behalf of David Dinkins. The core issue here was whether Dinkins lied about stock he once owned but said he later sold in the Inner City Broadcasting Corporation, a Harlem communications company run by his political ally Percy Sutton. The subsidiary issue is whether Ickes, as Dinkins' campaign counsel, might have helped him get away with it. According to Dinkins, he sold the stock—once valued at around $1 million—to his son in 1985, before he became mayor, for the sum of $58,000 payable in four years' time. But when asked to produce a bill of sale to verify the transfer, all the mayor had was a note scrawled on a legal pad from his son—subsequently called the "Dear Dad" letter—raising questions that the letter was part of a scheme to dodge taxes and avoid conflict of interest charges. Prosecutors, citing physical evidence analyzed by the Secret Service, would later say this note was probably written sometime during the campaign in October 1989, not in 1985 as Dinkins insisted. Believing that the case would be too hard to win, they declined to file any charges.

Ickes testified for three days before the federal grand jury in Brooklyn that was impaneled in

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1990 to probe the "Dear Dad" matter. According to certain tabloid press accounts, federal prosecutors were convinced that Ickes had had a hand in the letter's concoction and had perjured himself in his grand jury testimony. Those familiar with the grand jury proceedings, however, say that Ickes did not help concoct the note but did aggressively stonewall prosecutors searching for key campaign documents. "Ickes took a very broad view of attorney-client privilege," said one former prosecutor. "He was withholding an extraordinary amount of material—records, memos—from the inquiry, saying it was privileged."

Asked about his role in the "Dear Dad" controversy, Ickes is cordial, but seems as if he's still in the grand jury mode. Like his responses in the Whitewater matter, his fractional answers conceal as much as they reveal. Noting that anyone who had talked about what went on in the grand jury was doing so illegally, Ickes insists there was "complete cooperation" with the grand jury and that all documents that were subpoenaed were turned over. He also points out that he was not in a position to exert attorney-client privilege—a technical distinction that makes little practical difference in terms of his alleged refusal to turn over what the federal prosecutors wanted to see, say those familiar with his testimony.

Ickes' 30 years of hardball politics have made him more than a few enemies; without a doubt there are a lot of sharp knives out for him. Yet even if the charges against him have gotten wider play because of personal and political foes, there are still reasons to ask whether Ickes is fit for such high office and should be given such a powerful brief. (In addition to Whitewater and health care, after all, Ickes will be supervising the midterm congressional elections.) Ickes represents a conundrum for the Democrats, particularly those on the left: How to square his devotion to the good fight in light of uncomfortable facts about his past, facts that in many instances directly contradict the principles for which the good fight is supposed to be fought. David Wright articulated this quandry and the doubts many feel about Ickes' ethical compass. "It's quite a strange dichotomy, really," he says. "To be out there getting votes for Jesse Jackson one week and the next week rubbing elbows with Tony the Horse. I just don't see how you can divorce the two so completely." □

The Washington Monthly

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The Washington Post

How does a homeless family end up in a room in a welfare hotel costing taxpayers $2,250 a month? The answer, according to this trenchant look at low income housing policy, is a perverse web of state and federal laws that makes the most expensive solution to homelessness the easiest for city officials to offer. The problem, as Gladwell shows by following one woman's path to a New York City hotel, has a vexing circularity: "Because there are not enough low income apartments in New York City, Ivette Lopez could not afford her own place. The state government could not help her because the federal government could not help her. Because the feds could not help her, the city had to put her in a welfare hotel at $2,250 a month. And why can't the city take her out of the hotel? Because there aren't enough low income apartments in New York City."

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Nominations for stories published or aired in July and August will close August 15. The winner will be announced in the November issue.

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Date: February 28, 1994

To: Roger Kovar, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

From: Dan Rowley, Chief of Staff and University Strategic Planner

Re: Herm's Walking Tours

For some time now, the President has wanted to "walk the halls" around campus to drop in on classes, faculty offices, and business offices. The purpose of these walks is informal, and designed to allow Herm to see and be seen throughout the campus. There is no set agenda.

He has decided he would like to walk through Ross Hall, Michener Library, and Candelaria (in this order) this coming Monday, the 7th of March, from 1:30 pm until 3:30 pm. I will be accompanying him to help him follow-up on items and issues that will undoubtedly come along. It will not be necessary for you or anyone else from your office to join us, but I did not want our roaming the halls to be a surprise to you.

I suspect it would also be a good idea if you could let your faculty and department chairs know of the President's plans, so they also will not be surprised. Further, this might assure that some of the people who would like to have a word with Herm as he passes through will be given the chance to do so.

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The Chicago Post Office Scandal

Why snow, rain, sleet, gloom of night—and just about anything else that came up—prevented the Windy City's postal system from delivering the mail. Could your town be next?

BY CHARLES NICODEMUS

For Ormer C. Rogers, Jr., the road to Kansas City was paved with good intentions. Not that Kansas City is hell, but it *is* the place where Ormer Rogers—the Chicago area's top postal official—was sent after he decided to get a handle on just how bad mail service was in Chicago's five long-troubled north lakefront postal districts.

You may have heard about Chicago's mail problems once they became a nationally publicized headache for the post office. What you might not know is that the chain of events that helped sink Ormer Rogers was set in motion by a disgruntled customer. In late November 1993, a man named Jerry Stevens failed to get mail for the fourth day in a row. Stevens, who lives in one of Chicago's north lakefront postal districts, helps run a party planning service that is dependent on diligent mail deliveries. In search of his missing mail, Stevens went to the Graceland station and—while waiting for a clerk to check on anything that might have been left behind—he strayed briefly through a pair of double Dutch doors and into a work area. There, Stevens said he saw a small mountain of undelivered mail "as wide as my apartment building." When the clerk reported there was nothing there for Stevens, he went home and, steaming with indignation, called one of the post office's central complaint numbers.

As postal inspectors would later note, those central information and complaint lines might ring as often as 85 times without being answered. But as bad luck (for the post office) would have it, Stevens got through quickly and reported what he had seen. A half hour later Stevens got a call from a "Mr. Bizbee," who said he was the Graceland station manager. He made a perfunctory apology for Stevens' poor mail service, and then—according to Stevens—Bizbee added: "The next time you visit our station, if you set one foot inside those Dutch doors again, you'll be subject to arrest." Security of the mails, and so forth.

Seething, Stevens called a reporter friend. An ensuing story detailed Stevens' experience and other postal problems along the north lakefront,

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Charles Nicodemus is an investigative reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times.

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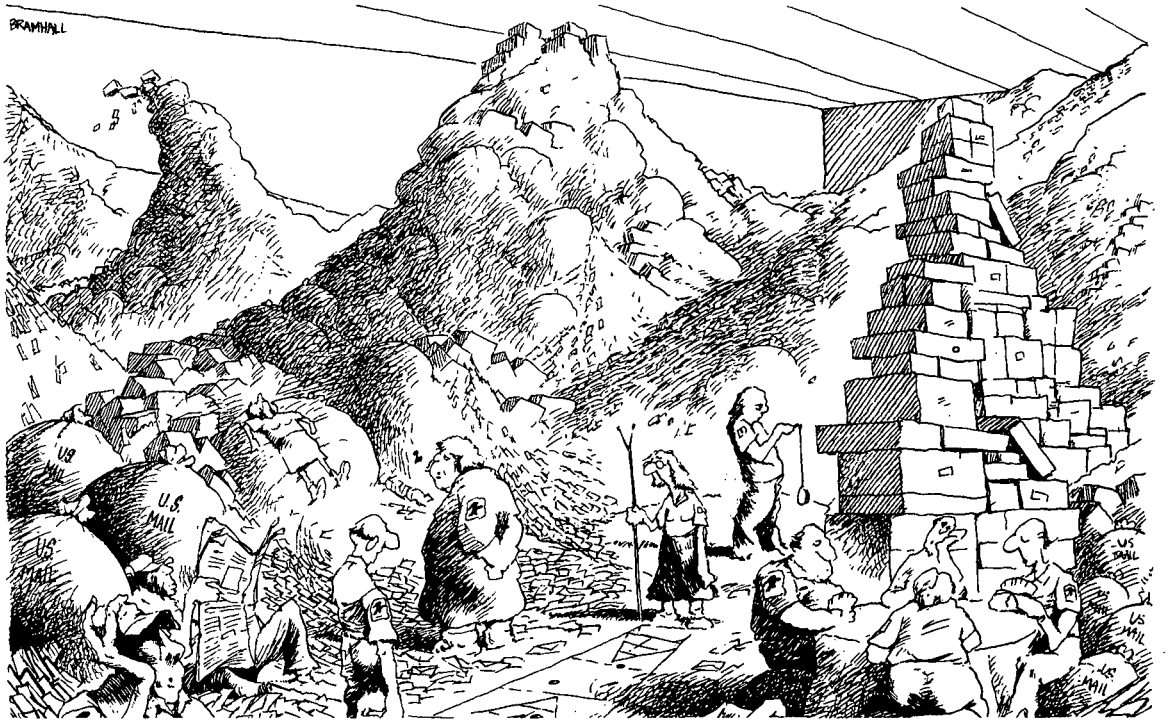

William Bramhall

problems that had been festering for years despite customer complaints and increasingly bitter protests from the area's congressman, Rep. Sidney Yates.

The mid-December news story, coming a month after yet another angry Yates letter to Postmaster General Marvin Runyon, led Rogers to order his staff and a team of postal inspectors to find out just how bad things really were "up north." The resulting two-pronged inquiry took the hide off Chicago Postmaster Jimmie Mason's north lakefront operations and found that many of the problems were citywide. Yet Mason did little except write Rogers an upbeat memo that promised reform without providing substance. In response to that lack of response, members of Rogers' staff leaked copies of the two investigative reports.

These reports, which hit the city like bombshells, revealed that:

➤ Mammoth mounds of undelivered mail were found at several stations—including one pile 800 feet long, nearly the length of three football fields.

➤ Information and complaint phones sometimes rang scores of times before being answered—if they were answered at all.

➤ Mail deliveries frequently were late or were skipped; many carriers lost mail, failed to deliver it, or didn't forward it for weeks or months. Other carriers didn't want to go out in the cold, or came in when it got dark without checking with supervisors.

➤ Lines were lengthy and waits interminable at postal station windows; lobbies were dingy and filthy; stamp and envelope vending machines didn't work; clerks were surly and unhelpful; and vacation "holds" on mail weren't started or weren't stopped.

➤ Discipline was erratic and frequently ineffective and morale was too often in the toilet. Workers complained that on-the-job drug and alcohol abuse sometimes went unpunished.

Hard working, conscientious carriers and postal station workers too often were discouraged by the chaos around them. The performance of even the best, most dedicated employees suffered as a result. Adding names and faces to these investigative findings were individual horror stories from postal customers who had phoned, faxed, messengered—and even mailed in—their

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complaints to reporters after the December story had run.

Before, during, and after this series of disclosures, there was more bad news. One carrier was found with 40,000 pieces of undelivered mail—some more than two months old—stashed in the back of his uninspected delivery truck. Another 20,000 pieces, some 11 years old, were found when the basement of a retired carrier's home was cleaned out. Nearly 200 pounds of commercial mail was found burning beneath a railroad viaduct and more than a ton of undelivered mail was found when fire broke out in a Chicago carrier's suburban condo. Fifteen hundred pieces of mail, much of it five years old, were found beneath the back porch of an ex-carrier's former home, and a rural letter carrier, who took his car in for new shocks, stunned mechanics when they found his trunk full of old mail.

In the midst of this maelstrom, Illinois Senator Paul Simon pressured Runyon into visiting Chicago for a one-day firsthand inspection. Angry postal customers took after him verbally like curs chewing on a mail carrier's cuffs. Runyon retreated to Washington and three days later sent in an unprecedented task force of 27 big city postal experts, who were rushed to the scene like an infectious disease team from the Centers for Disease Control. Its mission: to diagnose and cure what had become, by that time, a very high profile sickness.

Reporting back to the postal board, the task force said it found a mail system "in disrepair" that had been "deteriorating for years." On any given day, 40 percent of the north lakefront's 1.3 million pieces of mail was behind schedule or stalled. The citywide figure for all 51 postal stations was 30 percent.

By the time the dust had settled, not only had Rogers been demoted and dispatched to Kansas City, but Chicago Postmaster Jimmie Mason had been exiled to South Carolina, and Celestine Greene, the city's mail processing chief, had been bounced out to the city's southern suburbs.

Despite these actions, Chicago's traumatic experience has left the post office and its customers without answers to crucial questions. What went so drastically wrong in Chicago, and why? Whatever it was, is it curable? Is the task force's "back to basics" approach sufficient medicine? What took Washington so long to prescribe this radical cure? And most important: Is the city's post office symptomatic of deeper difficulties that are waiting to surface in other major cities?

That last question has been bugging the Postal Service's board of governors. It meets monthly—privately for one full day, then publicly for an hour or two the next morning. At the open meetings, hints have been dropped about the board's private apprehensions: Runyon has warned that Chicago's problems should serve as "a wake-up call" for the entire Postal Service. And after the closed-door sessions, which are supposed to be confidential and off-the-record, several board members have confided that Chicago's ailments have been the subject of angry exchanges and worried discussions.

The concern: that publicity about Chicago's problems would lead employees in post offices around the country to blow the whistle on similar problems—especially in New York and Los Angeles, where difficult problems already have drawn a smattering of national attention.

Postage Overdue

For the U. S. Postal Service, the spotlight that Chicago's problems has attracted could not have come at a worse time. The system is in the process of raising rates, with the cost of a 29-cent first class mail stamp expected to increase to 32 cents in early 1995. Federal law provides that when the Postal Service starts to run a deficit, it must ask the Postal Rate Commission for a rate increase. And if the commission decides the Postal Service's fiscal ills are real, the commission must approve the increase. Obviously, Runyon believes this unpleasant medicine will go down easier if the public is convinced the post office is doing a good job.

Competition, moreover, is increasing daily from Federal Express and from other companies and technologies, particularly fax machines. More and more critics are rapping the Postal Service for its monopoly on first class mail, warning that the service is a dinosaur that must be prodded into greater efficiency by letting other companies compete for that lucrative first class business.

And the post office has been aggressively seeking to burnish its image—spending millions

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of dollars on a new logo, on nationwide advertising, and on publicity about surveys such as a recent Roper Poll that found that the Postal Service is the nation's most respected government agency. Runyon has even hired Ronald Reagan's former White House spokesman, Larry Speakes, in hopes he'll help make Runyon another great communicator. But the adverse publicity generated by the Chicago disclosures threatens to trash those public relations investments.

But, in Chicago anyway, the post office is making some changes. Hundreds of new carriers are being hired and properly trained. Supervisors are being retrained and retired managers are being brought back as consultants. Truck maintenance and scheduling are stressed, so mail now gets to stations on time. Carriers are taught improved sorting and delivery techniques. Mail drop-off and relay boxes are monitored, as are pickup boxes. Station lobbies are being cleaned, painted and lit better. Lobby supervisors speed service at lunch time; window clerks are being trained to smile and help; station hours are extended and all vending techniques taught. Faulty forwarding systems and machines are being repaired. Neighborhood councils are being set up to get customer input.

As the stories were hitting the newspapers, one carrier was found with 40,000 pieces of undelivered mail—some more than two months old—stashed in the back of his uninspected delivery truck. Another 20,000 pieces, some 11 years old, were found when the basement of a retired carrier's home was cleaned out.

Brought in to replace Rogers and coordinate the cleanup was William Good, from the Postal Service's big Long Beach, California, district—a popular, respected one-time NASA engineer. Good and the task force now claim service is slowly improving. But a number of other problems have not yet been fully addressed:

- In the Postal Service's recent restructuring and "buyout" campaign to retire senior—and therefore more expensive—personnel, Chicago lost 1,500 senior carriers, supervisors and other veterans out of a workforce of 16,000. Replacements have been too slow in coming, with too little training.
- Nationwide, the postal system's once-tough discipline and management style has softened to permit more worker-management cooperation, a major Runyon emphasis. But in Chicago, many supervisors complain discipline is a serious problem.

What took Washington so long to act on Chicago? In the Postal Service's national quarterly survey of customer satisfaction, Chicago has ranked dead last since the survey started in 1991. Yates has been hectoring postmasters general since 1987. Chicago had seven postmasters in seven years. But Washington didn't step in forcefully until those internal memos leaked out.

If any major national business found its third largest market so screwed up for so long and failed to act, heads would roll at headquarters.

In mid June, Runyon finally buckled under what Clay called this "chorus of criticism" and put in a new chief operating officer. He also eliminated a layer of vice presidents and reorganized the service's higher eschelons to make Washington and regional executives more accountable.

But there remains this intriguing question: Which city will be next? Where else are there long lines at windows and surly, arrogant clerks, late mail deliveries, long lost letters, lengthy forwarding snafus, uncaring carriers, unsympathetic complaint handlers, and inquiry phones that ring interminably?

Does any of that sound familiar? If so, why not follow Jerry Stevens' example and call a reporter? □

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Capitalism's Dark Shadows

An alarming and rarely mentioned paradox: For many of the country's richest and most powerful, a recession might be preferable to what it takes to get the economy moving again

BY JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

The beginning of the 1990s was dominated, not surprisingly, by the revolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. An imperfect economic system had come apart and, in some sense, was being replaced with no system at all. The controlling fact, however, seemed evident: Communism had failed—and where it did survive, as in China, it was undergoing major transformation. Capitalism, the market system, was triumphant. There was no lack of speeches to this effect; nothing so nurtures oratory as the commonplace.

The oratory in this case was, however, more than normally overdone. Capitalism, especially as manifested in the United States but also in Western Europe and Japan, was encountering difficulties as well. There was, with much else, the enduring recession.

To say that a recession endures is to speak in contradictory terms. A recession is thought to be a temporary departure from the norm—from the substantially full employment of willing workers and a steady expansion in economic product. This has not been the recent case. There now seems to be the possibility that in fact a recession—or at least a state of less-than-full recovery—can exist over a longer period of time than we are accustomed to.

Beginning in the summer of 1990 in the United States, there was depressed economic performance and high unemployment, ranging up to more than 7 percent of the labor force plus the many more who had given up the search for work and were no longer recorded. Economic stagnation and a high rate of unemployment continued over the next many months and acquired an aspect of permanence.

It was a significant contribution of John Maynard Keynes to economic thought to suggest the modern economy might well enter upon an equilibrium of underemployment and low performance. This was the living fact of the Great Depression. Now, in surveying the world scene 60 years later, one can see the reward of history: It is

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John Kenneth Galbraith is Paul M. Warburg Professor of Economics emeritus at Harvard University. This article is adapted from his book A Journey Through Economic Time, *just published by Houghton Mifflin. Reprinted by permission.*

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obvious that what has happened before, in the Depression, might be happening again.

By 1993, when the "recession" had lasted three years and more, the possibility of a depressive equilibrium could no longer be ignored. Even in early 1994, when the recovery was supposedly in full swing, the average U.S. work week reached a post-World War II high, a sign that companies, still anxious about the economy, were working their employees longer hours rather than hiring additional hands. There is need, however, to distinguish between causes that are temporary and those that are permanent.

There were economic legacies from the 1980s that, by their nature, were temporary in effect; while both precipitating and deepening recession, they would, with the passing of time, release the economy from their depressive influence. Thus the decade was a period of massive speculation in the financial markets, especially in real estate. The Florida real property boom of the 1920s reappeared in nearly all the major cities of the nation, with the banks, small, large, and very large, joining in to finance it. After the collapse of this speculation, there remained the economic wreckage—empty office buildings, an idled construction industry, banks replete with bad collateral and newly discovered executive error, a sharp restriction on new bank lending.

Adding to the depressive effect from the banking system and the speculation were the savings and loan associations, the infamous S&Ls. These, like the airlines, had been released from regulation a few years earlier. But in a striking example of differential social concern that allows social action, even socialism, if it is for the affluent, the S&Ls were allowed to retain a highly effective access to government funds through public guarantee of deposits. So endowed, they went on an unparalleled speculative spree, which was laced with a far from subtle admixture of both mental delinquency and forthright larceny. Proposals for reinstituting regulation were righteously rejected by Reagan administration officials.

With time, the depressive effect of the real estate speculation, the banking troubles, and the S&L disaster will come to an end. A new confidence will lead on to the next episode of speculation; euphoria will arrive. So it has been; so it will be. Thus does time work its therapy.

Similarly subject to the remedial effects of time is the mergers-and-acquisitions, leveraged-buyout mania. This too was strongly but not permanently depressive.

In the modern large corporation, authority resides in normal circumstances with the management. And all accepted economic doctrine assumes—no doubt rightly—that the basic objective of the industrial firm is the maximization of return. The great mergers-and-acquisitions mania of the 1980s in its several designs was the result of the desire to protect and enhance profit and also the prestige and power of the managers—the executives. Similarly, the leveraged buyouts defended the existing management from corporate raiders—from those who, in search of their own wealth and aggrandizement, threatened the executive position, prestige, and return of those already in command. (It also provided a rich reward to the investment bankers and the lawyers who stimulated, financed, or guided the process.)

The common result of both the mergers and acquisitions and the leveraged buyouts was the substitution of debt for equity. Money was borrowed to buy up the stock of firms being acquired or preventively to buy the stock that was in danger of giving control and therewith pay and prestige to hostile raiders. In both cases there could be temporary monetary return to the selling stockholders; more durably, the newly merged firms and the firm bought out by its management were burdened with debt from the exercise. Servicing the debt, in turn, had a strongly depressive effect. Investment expenditures had to be curtailed, particularly those with a longer-run reward, like those for research and development. Unpromising units were sold or closed down. Payrolls were aggressively trimmed, adding to the already growing unemployment.

With time, these adverse effects also lose their force. The claims of debt diminish; new in-

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vestment is encouraged; employment and income increase.

The junk-bond episode of the 1980s will have, and perhaps has had, a similarly short aftermath. There was nothing remarkable about this aberration; simply said, it was discovered yet again that individuals and institutions flush with, or anyhow possessed of, cash would buy securities regardless of risk were the interest returns high enough. For junk bonds these returns were very high, ranging well upward from 15 percent; assuming there was no loss, this was very attractive. The possibility of loss was then ignored. Investment bankers, and particularly the then-much-admired house of Drexel Burnham Lambert, underwrote the bonds, which is to say they acquired them for sale to a largely unsuspecting public. When, as ever, the day of reckoning arrived, the junk market collapsed and the less fortunate were left in possession of now-worthless paper. Drexel Burnham Lambert passed into bankruptcy; its most distinguished and highly regarded operator, Mr. Michael Milken, passed into a minimum-security jail. For the economy as a whole there was a further depressive effect from those left newly impoverished, but this, too, like so much else, will be forgotten with time.

We have here the most direct and visible causes of the recession of the early 1990s, and in them lies the hope that it will prove to be a temporary phenomenon. The memory of the great speculative episode fades. The financial mind, or what is loosely so described, turns from the past to the next success.

However, as one views the aftermath of the 1980s and the conditions in the early 1990s, there is the less benign possibility. Perhaps the American economy, and in lesser measure the world economy, has entered a new phase in economic development; perhaps there is the previously mentioned tendency for the economy to find its equilibrium not at full employment and a high rate of economic growth but, in the absence of strong state action, at a high level of unemployment and a minimal rate of growth.

This possibility can be traced to the distribution of income. When viewed as a social concern, a reasonably equitable distribution of income is traditionally urged; it contributes to a sense of fairness and is a manifestation of social justice. Such a thought is, however, strongly condemned and righteously resisted by those of more conservative, politically cautious belief. For them it invades and sets aside one of the high principles of the market system.

Not mentioned in this continuing and often ardent debate is the possibility that a highly unequal distribution of income can be strongly dysfunctional for the performance of the economic system. That may have been the case in the United States in recent years.

The United States in recent times has had an increasingly unequal distribution of income. In the 1980s, approximately 70 percent of all gains in income accrued to the top 1 percent of income earners. The top 1 percent of families earned 12 percent of all income and held more than a third of all net worth.

The counterpart of this concentration of income and wealth is a damaging unreliability as to its use. In established and orthodox economics, savings are invested and spent no less reliably than the money that goes to the supermarket. In real life, if money goes to individuals in very large chunks, it may be neither spent nor invested. It may be held in liquid form; some of it, as in the 1980s, may be absorbed in functionless debt creation, such as that which financed the mergers and acquisitions and the leveraged buyouts.

With recession there is a further adverse effect on spending and real investment. Then, as the product of economic uncertainty, the urge for personal liquidity becomes stronger. Income is paid out; there is no companion return to consumer purchase or real investment. The poor spend what they receive in good times and bad. So, on the whole, do those with middle incomes. The rich have a choice. When they neither spend nor invest, a new equilibrium is set by the reduced demand. To keep the economy at full employment, there is then no alternative to a supporting government expenditure—the deficit.

This was the unintended history of the 1980s. Tax reduction returned income generously to the rich; so did speculation. To compensate for the income functionally so idled, the federal government ran deficits in a range from $128 billion to $221 billion. (Previously, under President Carter, the deficit had been between $40.2 billion and $79 billion.) Nothing more distinguished President Reagan from his predecessors

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than his commitment to deficit financing. Without this government support to the economy as an offset to idled, unspent income—a good part being government outlay for the defense buildup—economic growth would have been much lower and unemployment much higher. The recollection of the Reagan presidency would not have been of its seven fat years. The recession that followed on the collapse of the speculative boom of the 1980s would have been far more serious without this support.

There is a problem in using the government deficit to sustain the flow of purchasing power—aggregate demand—and it is not especially subtle. If adequate, the government support so provided can work effectively in the short run; then the long run arrives. It becomes necessary to command more of the public revenue to service the national debt. That, an essentially sterile claim, takes precedence or seems to take precedence over socially more useful functions of the state.

Given the tendency for the modern economy, in the absence of state support, to find its equilibrium at inadequate levels of output and unemployment, the deeper causes must be discovered and therewith the relevant remedies. The distribution and resultant spending of income must come ineluctably to public attention. There is a social case for equitably distributed income, but it is also functionally necessary for the effective operation of the modern market economy. That the recession *cum* depression of the 1990s came first to the United States and spread to the world from here should surprise no one; as to widely distributed and therefore reliably expended income—the first essential of modern capitalism—we are far from the best case.

A Good Recession

When one looks at the present scene, a further possibility emerges, one that is also rarely mentioned in our time. It is that in the modern polity economic recession, continuing unemployment and generally low economic growth are preferred by many (and especially by those with political voice and influence) to more vigorous economic expansion and to the measures necessary to achieve it.

In the modern economy an influential part of the population is in a relatively secure position as to income and earnings. There is the large corporate bureaucracy. Much is made in poor times of those workers who are shed; there is little mention of the comfortable position of those who do the shedding. There is also the large public bureaucracy and the very extensive professional class: doctors, lawyers, academicians, accountants; the list goes on almost indefinitely. Here, too, a recession is not deeply felt or feared; for many and perhaps most in these circumstances, professional position and pay are secure, and the stable living costs in a recession are not unwelcome.

There are also large numbers living on Social Security or pensions, and they are either unaffected or favorably affected by recession or stagnation. Inflation is less of a threat to the many with fixed incomes. Unemployment is regretted but less so when suffered by others unknown. For numerous employers there is available with greater unemployment a more willing, more amenable, less assertive, more stable labor supply.

Recession and underemployment are especially to be preferred to the measures that contend with them. Government expenditure would add to the deficit, and from this could come the specter of future tax increases. Low interest rates, even if not especially effective against recession and continuing unemployment, are adverse to rentier income. They also lower the price that banks charge for their salable product, namely the money they lend. Bank and central-bank influence, under the shadow of seeming neutrality, is usually against what is called "easy money." Longer-run steps to correct the adverse functional distribution of income clearly would be unwelcome to all so affected.

It is not possible in the world today to seem to be in favor of recession, to be opposed to economic growth. So to argue openly would be thought profoundly eccentric. The fact remains, and with a powerful influence on public policy: For a substantial and very influential part of the modern industrial population, recession, stagnation, and the underemployment equilibrium are not adverse phenomena and are much to be preferred to the relevant corrective action. This, too, is a shadow on the modern capitalist miracle. □

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"... And I'll Turn on the Heat When I'm Done Cleaning My Yacht."

Everybody knows that New York City's school custodians are overpaid underachievers. So why can't the city do something about it?

BY JOHN FAGER

My 10-year obsession with changing the New York City school custodial system began one day in 1984 when I was dropping off my son at P.S. 87 on Manhattan's Upper West Side. The school's principal told me the city health department had just cited the school cafeteria. The cafeteria was so filthy that had it been a restaurant, instead of the place where 1,000 children ate every day, it would have been closed.

I said that we should talk to the custodian and ask that he clean it more often. She told me that she had already done that, and the custodian had retorted that his contract required only one cafeteria-scrubbing a week. And as for the health code violation, he didn't give a damn.

The custodian wore a coat and tie to school, never did any hands-on work, and supervised two cleaners. For this he was paid $40,000 to $50,000. He had put his wife on the payroll as a do-nothing secretary earning more than $20,000 (more than a new teacher made at the time). And he charged the school PTA $9,000 in fees (even though he worked no extra hours nor provided any extra services) for the PTA's use of the school for an after-school program.

I told the principal we should complain to the custodian's supervisor. She told me that they were members of the custodial union. I asked to whom we could address our complaints. She said, "No one."

The next school year, 1984-85, I was working as an investigative producer, with correspondent Arnie Diaz, at WCBS-TV News. I spent three months researching and producing a two-part series about the system and discovered that what was happening at my kid's school was the rule in New York, not the exception. By contract, custodians have their personnel sweep the classrooms every other day, scrub the cafeteria floor once per week, and clean windows three times a year.

You've probably heard something about the all-powerful New York school custodians; the first reformers' report came as long ago as 1942. (It concluded, as if written in 1994: "The custodial system itself does not seem to insure a proper degree of

John Fager is co-chairman of the Parents' Coalition in New York City.

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competent service on the part of the custodian.") And if you read *The New York Times* or watch "60 Minutes," you will occasionally catch an item on how the abusive system—a public system that operates totally for the benefit of the employees—just keeps on going. You would think that so much publicity, over so many years, would have generated enough public outrage to persuade lawmakers to change the system. But curiously, reform hasn't come, and that itself is proof positive that once a self-serving bureaucracy is in place and allowed to fester, sometimes it can take nothing short of dynamite to reform the system. In New York, the time for dynamite has come.

How did we get into this mess, anyway? The origins of the abusive contract that favor custodians lie in the 19th century, when custodians lived in the schools because coal-burning furnaces required constant tending. Since the schools were also their homes, the custodians were given enormous authority and autonomy. But when the custodians stopped living in the schools, instead of taking that authority away, the union successfully clung to its privileges and the now-familiar abuses began. (After all, once the custodians weren't living on the premises, their direct interest in keeping the place clean faded accordingly.) At mid-century, as the comfortable contract evolved, unions were in their heyday and were able to keep winning concessions from the Board of Education. Politicians, after all, tend to fear organized interests such as unions, which vote as a bloc, far more than the general public. And one potential check on this developing disaster—the press—was not then covering unions in a way that would have attracted adequate public attention, so contracts negotiated in the dark took root. And once they took root, inertia—combined with the difficulty of focusing public attention on a specific problem long enough to pass substantial reforms—set in.

They Rarely Do Windows

The custodians have the best of both worlds: By contract, they're treated like independent contractors even though they are highly protected civil service workers. The city Board of Education gives each custodian a lump sum of money based on the size of the school and he (it is almost always a white man) is then free to hire a staff that works for him.

This is how, in 1985, 200 custodians employed their wives as handymen but then used them as private secretaries. Why are they hired as handymen and not as secretaries? Because handyman pay is better, and there is no secretarial title. This misuse of the handyman position—a job that should be filled by someone who can fix a furnance or repair a broken window—is one reason schools are in such poor shape.

During my research for the WCBS series, I found that custodians could also buy jeeps and use Board of Education funds for 5/12 of the purchase price. They could drive the jeeps as their own and would own the vehicles after five years. Why jeeps and why 5/12ths? Well, the unstated premise of the contract is that we have a five month snow season in New York City and the jeeps are used to clear snow during this period. Using that logic, the Board spends $1 million on the vehicles annually.

Then there are the after-school building use fees. After school, in the evenings, on weekends, on school vacations, and especially in the summer, the public pays the custodians extra to use the schools. Even school teams had to pay for the use of a pool, gym or field. In most cases the custodian did no extra work and didn't even have to be there at night or on weekends, yet he would benefit from all fees.

The afternoon before the first report aired on WCBS in January 1985, I received a call at the office. The anonymous caller threatened that harm would come to the people involved if the report aired. I asked if the caller wanted to talk to Arnie, the reporter. He did, and repeated the threat to him. For the next week Arnie was accompanied by CBS security.

Four months after the reports aired, a new custodian contract was signed. The Board announced that fees to custodians for groups to use the school after hours had been eliminated from 3 to

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6 p.m. It sounded like a great reform.

How wrong we all were. When the small print was released a few months later, the custodial fees from 3 to 6 hadn't been eliminated; they had been waived for a $5,650 raise, plus pension costs, for each of the custodians, for a total cost of $6 million, whether there were after-school programs in the particular school or not. We also learned that there was a loophole: Most elementary schools still had to pay fees. After this "reform," for example, at P.S. 87 we were forking over $5,000 in fees while the custodian collected his $5,650 in extra salary from the Board. The upshot? After the 1985 "reform," it was actually *more* expensive for us to use our school.

The Janitor is Rich

In 1987 I left television news and went to work for Andrew Stein, then City Council president, as his education advisor. I suggested that since the custodial contract was again being negotiated that I put together reports and work with the media to focus public attention on the scandal.

I visited one principal who had documented how often his custodian was not in the building—including the first day after the Christmas recess, when the school was frigid and nobody could turn on the heat except the custodian. When the principal finally found him in the afternoon and asked why there wasn't any heat, the custodian told him to mind his own business.

This principal, Norman Kaufman of J.H.S. 141 in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, a middle-class neighborhood, also complained to the custodial supervisors, including Kirby Coughlin, the Board of Education manager in charge of the custodians. Coughlin never responded effectively. (In ensuing years, we would find out that Coughlin allowed custodians, who had been convicted of embezzling from their budget to keep their jobs without any kind of suspensions. He also allowed a convicted drug dealer to become a custodian who then set up a rifle range in the basement of the school, bought marijuana, and shot off rifles.)

During the first five months of 1988 Stein was able to galvanize the city around this issue. The reports documented the abusive school use fee system, the jeeps, the nepotism, the lack of accountability. Public pressure was put on the Board of Education and its negotiating team. Unfortunately, it was the same team that had negotiated the 1985 "reform" contract, and they fooled us again. The new president of the Board announced a "historic settlement."

Once again, a close reading of the document showed that the "reforms," except in one potentially important instance, were shams. For example, the new contract called for a one-year moratorium on the purchase of jeeps while the Board studied all custodian equipment purchases. (The custodians can buy $3,500 computers, fax machines, and refrigerators and, like the jeeps, own them after five years.)

One year later the moratorium ended, and the custodians bought 200 jeeps, twice the normal number. I asked Coughlin what happened to the contract-mandated equipment study and was told that, "We don't need a study." To no avail I reminded Coughlin that the study was required by the contract.

The after-school fees were also "reformed" along the lines developed in the 1985 contract. Instead of eliminating them, the custodians again agreed to waive the fees in the evenings and on the weekends. In exchange, the Board paid them a huge salary increase above their automatic 5 percent annual increase—on average, an extra $6,000. In 1988 these fees and salaries in lieu of fees totaled $35 million.

The one promising reform, or so I thought at the time, was the replacement of custodial supervisors, who were members of the custodial union, with new Board of Education "plant managers." The contract stated that the new supervisors would be non-civil service and would serve at the pleasure of the chancellor.

This appeared to be a good reform. Then it was scuttled. First, the union, with the ink still wet on the contract, went to the state civil service commission and challenged this provision. It argued that the position should not only be civil service but "promotional." The custodians won. The commission ruled that the new plant managers had to be hired from a civil service list and that only custodians were eligible to take the test.

The other union strategy for undermining this reform involved Coughlin. I started to hear that Coughlin was hiring former custodians and pressuring all the plant managers to go easy. Having

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watched two reform efforts crash when Coughlin had been part of the picture, I was suspicious of him. My doubts were confirmed when I received, from an anonymous source, a copy of a 1979 letter on Local 891 stationery. The contents of the letter were inconsequential, and I couldn't figure out why it had been sent to me. Then I read the names of the executive board on the side of the letter, and there was Kirby Coughlin's name. It all came together: The fox was in charge of the henhouse. A former custodial union leader was now supposed to be making custodians work for the public.

Dirty Deals

Since the summer of 1988 I continued to work, as a parent, with the media to expose the custodial system and keep the issue alive. In 1990, when Joe Fernandez was selected as chancellor, he ordered the schools to contract out as custodians retired. Within a year, 88 schools had private contractors.

Unfortunately, the man in charge of contracting out was Kirby Coughlin, and once again principals had no one to support them when they tried to hold the private custodians accountable. There was also an effort to undermine the private contractors. For instance, when P.S. 156 in Brooklyn was closed in the Fall of 1993 during the asbestos crisis, all the children were shifted to P.S. 12. This practically doubled its student population. However, the private contractor at P.S. 12 was not given any extra money to clean and maintain the crowded school. And the P.S. 156 custodian and his whole staff were allowed to stay and do nothing back at their now-empty building.

Another event in 1992 kept the pressure on the custodians. I contacted Frank Devine, a producer at "60 Minutes," and persuaded him to do a piece about the system. He and correspondent Steve Kroft aired their report in November 1992, a highlight of which was secretly taped footage of a custodian puttering around his 35-foot yacht during school hours.

But the 1993 firing of Chancellor Fernandez, the hiring of his replacement Ramon Cortines, and the David Dinkins-Rudy Giuliani mayoral campaign sidetracked attention from the time of the "60 Minutes" report until this spring.

Then this past May, Cortines announced that the Board and Local 891 had agreed to a "revolutionary" new contract. Some critics of the system thought that this represented progress, while others, most importantly Mayor Giuliani, attacked the reforms as inadequate. One reporter told me that he was confused by the opposite positions taken by critics. I said the different positions result from how you answer the critical question: Do you believe that reforms of the contract can transform the custodial system? Or do you assume that it is so hopelessly divorced from the public good that only a fundamental restructuring and competition from a significant privatization test could make a difference?

The problem, in my view (and in the new mayor's), is not just the contract; it is the entire culture of the system. The union and its dedication to the traditional ways of doing business, which means children and staff be damned, is a major problem. Also, the reprehensible attitude of too many custodians that they are not a part of the school community—a situation exacerbated by the growing number of minorities in schools while many custodians are white—needs to be changed.

This whole culture cannot be altered even with genuine contract reforms, and the reforms put forward in May were not genuine but simply more Board of Education "reforms." For example, the Board announced "the elimination or reduction of all custodial labor fees for after-school activities, saving users such as community groups $4.5 million per year city-wide." But a study I worked on in the city Comptroller's Office documented $35 million in fees and extra salaries in lieu of fees in 1988. Those costs have gone up during the past six years.

The Board also proposed "the establishment of new cleanliness standards to be judged by school principals and the tying of promotions to performance." These revolutionary ideas at the Board, but will it happen? No. To make it work, every principal would have to sit down with the custodian and the custodial supervisor, who is in league with the custodian, and negotiate a cleaning and maintenance plan. The principal's rating would be based on the custodian executing the plan. However, the principals would quickly get worn down by the custodians who love to negotiate.

The Board also proposed "a cap on high-end

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custodial salary rates at 1991 levels." This sounds good until you realize that the cap would be $76,859. Only Board of Ed officials would characterize such a cap as a reform. Custodians should earn about what the average teacher makes ($35,000), not more than twice that.

And finally, the Board proposed that "all equipment purchased by custodians remain Board property." The problem was not just who ended up *owning* the jeeps and computers, but that they were being bought at all. If the custodians stopped spending money on jeeps and their wives, they might have some money for a flushometer or for a ballast for a fluorescent light. Genuine reform would authorize principals to approve or disapprove purchases and personnel decisions.

This is a public system that needs to be dismantled and restructured. Mayor Giuliani is proposing to contract out between 300 to 500 schools and run a competition between the regular custodians and the private contractors. What is also needed, though it has yet to be proposed, is a complete dismantling of the dysfunctional central custodial system. School-based management would bring control of the custodians to the principals and the neighborhood school councils.

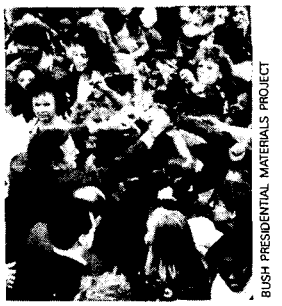
If a custodian wants to hire his wife as a handyman, let the school council decide if she is qualified. If he wants to buy a jeep for snow removal, let the principal review it. If he refuses to work and let his men work, let the school council bring him up on charges. And if he wants to charge for allowing the PTA to use the school, let the school council decide what fees are appropriate.

Besides the rejection of the phony "reform" contract in May, there was some progress toward cleaning up the existing system in June. For one, after an exposé in *New York* magazine, the chancellor forced the resignation of the chief executive of school facilities. Also, by September, Kirby Coughlin and his three borough managers will probably be gone from their supervisory jobs.

Right now in New York City everyone is walking around saying, "Let's go Rangers" or "Let's go Knicks." When I think about the whole corrupt, dysfunctional custodial system, I quietly say to myself, "Let's go Rudy." □

POLICY AND OPINION IN THE GULF WAR

John Mueller



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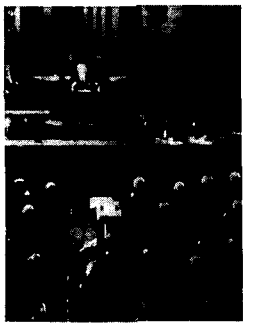

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Tidbits & Outrages

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST, I

When some of her colleagues on the Vista, California, city council objected to holding a dinner meeting at public expense, council member Jeanette Smith responded, "You're so damned concerned with what the public thinks that it gets in the way of what's best for us."

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST, II

When reporter Steve Harvey of *The Los Angeles Times* called the office of Huntington Beach Mayor Linda Moulton-Patterson, a staff member told him, "She is not in the office. She is running for county supervisor and has left instructions that she won't be back in the office until after the primary."

"AND STAFF, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET OUR ELECTION CONSULTANT, LANI GUINIER"

In an election to choose the school schedule for the Euclid Avenue Elementary School in Los Angeles, the Euclid staff arranged to get its preference passed, even though the alternative was much more popular among parents, by giving each school staffer six votes and parents only one.

BUT ENOUGH ABOUT ME—WHAT DID YOU THINK OF MY NEW BOOK WHILE YOU WERE DYING?

A *New Yorker* compilation of celebrity reminiscences of Jacqueline Kennedy included this contribution from novelist and screenwriter Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: "I just finished my most recent manuscript, and she knew I was going on a trip, and she called to say, 'Can I have it before you go?' I'd like to think that she had it with her—the most precious part of me—by her at the end."

"THE KID HAS POTENTIAL," SAID CLARK CLIFFORD

When asked if the current lobbying activities of longtime Clinton aide Betsey Wright were in any way incompatible with Clinton's criticisms of Washington lobbyists, White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers told *The New York Times* that in those criticisms, Clinton was primarily referring to former federal officials who use their access after leaving the government while Wright "has never worked for the federal government as far as I know."

—Scott Shuger

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Who's W

After the White House travel office debacle, why was **David Watkins** allowed to continue in the top internal White House administrative job until he again embarrassed **Bill Clinton** with his two-helicopter golf game? Observers hope it wasn't connected to a singular act of generosity in the mid-eighties when Watkins engineered the cellular telephone deal that gave **Hillary Clinton** a profit of $44,000 on a $2,000 investment. . . .

A recent article in *Vanity Fair* by **Leslie Bennetts** depicts **Hillary Clinton** as "defensive and grim" with a "pious self-righteousness." Even those sympathetic to the **Clintons** are warning them to stop being defensive. "Stop denying there's a problem," writes *The Wall Street Journal*'s **Al Hunt**, who complains that "their basic pitch, in private as well as public, is that attacks on Mr. Clinton merely are a right-wing plot to overturn the 1992 election.". . .

We've heard lots of explanations for **Bill Clinton**'s zigzags as president, but the most intriguing is the one offered by a Washington psychiatrist who pins the rap on the presidential libido. This shrink believes that Clinton's erratic behavior springs from the president's attempt to control his strong sex drive. The shrink also believes that Clinton would have been a great president if he had been elected 10 years later when his hormones would have cooled off. . . .

Speaking of matters hormonal, the Supreme Court may have helped **Bill Clinton** in one aspect of his defense against **Paula Jones**. In May, the court refused to extend the "rape shield rule," which bans evidence of a victim's sexual history in criminal cases of rape, to civil cases of sexual harassment. This means Clinton's defense attorneys can look into Jones' previous experiences and bring them up at the trial if they tend to cast doubt on her testimony. . . .

During the days between **Jacqueline Kennedy**'s death and her funeral, CNN interviewed scores of people who had known her less well than a member of CNN's own off-camera news staff, **Frances Lewine**, who was not interviewed but who had spent more time covering Jackie than any other reporter in the East Wing beat during the Kennedy presidency. Lewine was working for the Associated Press back then. . . .

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Connie Bruck's ego. . .Bill Clinton's libido. . . J.P. Morgan's fox in the chicken coop

uired publicly financed trips to Hong Kong, Aruba, nd Bangkok. You may also recall that an earlier wife f Barry's, **Mary Treadwell**, was convicted of em- ezzling federal money intended for a housing pro- ect—after buying herself a Mercedes and Barry a Volvo, who said later he had suspected nothing even hough Treadwell was making just $23,000 at the time. . . .

H. R. "Bob" Haldeman's ecent diaries are chock ull of seamy details about he presidency of **Richard M. Nixon**. One of the seamiest is the hitherto unknown story of how Nixon tried to blackmail **Lyndon Johnson** into using his nfluence with congres- sional Democrats to help halt the Watergate nvestigation. Nixon hreatened to reveal that Johnson had bugged him during the 1968 cam- paign. But Johnson let Nixon know that if Nixon did that, LBJ would release what the diaries then refer to as "deleted material—national security." **Who's Who** has a guess as to what the deleted material was. It was probably evidence that the Nixon forces had conspired with South Vietnamese leaders to sabotage October 1968 peace negotiations that, if successful, would have helped the Democrats [see "Tilting At Windmills," page 4].

The irony is that if LBJ had released his evidence before the 1968 election, Nixon might have been defeated. But Johnson was said to be so angry at **Hubert Humphrey** for not supporting LBJ's policy in Vietnam that LBJ refused to make the Nixon sabotage evidence public. . . .

Clinton's major Normandy speeches may not have equalled **Ronald Reagan**'s, but most observers thought they came pretty close. They were written by **Don Baer**, formerly of *U. S. News & World Report* and now chief presidential speechwriter; **Jeremy Rosner**, the soon-to-depart National Security Council staffer known for his writing ability; and **Eric Liu**, the new Generation X representative on the White House staff. . . .

Nobody here knows what to do about those pesky derivatives. Since they involve large risk at low cost, low, that is, until the investor loses his shirt and then the losses can become monstrous, most people here think they're a bad idea. But Wall Streeters argue that the business, if outlawed or even vigorously regulated, would just fly to other countries. Trying to figure a way out of this mess is an elite team of civil servants that, according to *The Washington Post*'s **Cindy Skyrzychi**, includes Treasury's **Norman Carlson**, the SEC's **Howard Kramer**, and **Ronald Hobson** of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. The Comptroller of the Currency, however, has brought in one expert who may turn out to be the fox in the chicken coop: **Douglas Harris**, a derivatives lawyer for J.P. Morgan & Co., a company that just happens to be a big player in the derivatives market. . . .

One quiet casualty of the **Dan Rostenkowski** indictment is **David Broder**, *The Washington Post*'s bigfoot political reporter/columnist. Broder, usually considered the soul of journalistic sobriety, was ordered off the Rostenkowski story by *Post* executive editor **Len Downie** after Broder wrote a valentine column to Rosty entitled "Why Washington Grieves." The Ways and Means chairman's legal problems, wrote Broder, have inspired a "genuine sadness that has affected almost everyone in official Washington." Downie then decided to keep his star away from the Rostenkowski story, telling **James Warren** of the *Chicago Tribune* that the column was "an open declaration" of sympathy toward the embattled Chicagoan. . . .

—*Susan Threadgill*

Roman Genn

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Who's Who Extra

There is an unspoken rule on Capitol Hill: the more complex the legislation, the more powerful the staffer. So as Congress tackles health care, a new crew of policy wonks comes out of obscurity and into power. Hill staffers are one of the invisible forces of Washington: They know the world about Congress, but no one in the world knows them. Yet they are the gatekeepers and the dealmakers for the bulk of the detailed health legislation—the largest domestic retooling since the Great Society. Here's a roster of this season's hottest Hill staffers, who—because of their expertise—can often be more powerful than their bosses. . . .

On the Senate side, the rubber meets the road in the Finance Committee, where Democrats hold a narrow 11 to 9 advantage. There, **Lawrence O'Donnell, Jr.**, the committee's chief of staff, rules the health care debate and is regarded as the Great Satan by the **Clintons** and those to their left. O'Donnell and his boss, Chairman **Daniel Patrick Moynihan**, are insisting on passing a bipartisan bill in committee, and to O'Donnell falls the job of corralling senators from both parties. Tough and unapologetically Boston Irish, O'Donnell stands out from the colorless crowd on the Hill (he prides himself on riding his Harley Davidson to the office). He relishes playing political hardball. An example: Speaking at a meeting of other senators' staffers about Clinton's economic package in 1993, which Moynihan wanted passed, O'Donnell said that if the bill passes, "you will find out what it is to have a chairman who is your best friend for eight years." If it fails, however, "you'll find out what it's like to have his undying bitterness.". . .

While O'Donnell is the enforcer, the committee's chief economist, **David Podoff**, works on the details. A former economist at the Social Security Administration's Office of Research and Statistics, Podoff knows his health care policy, and he knows his numbers, an essential job in a game where the White House, the Congressional Budget Office, and Congress are batting around different figures. . . .

O'Donnell's counterpart on the Republican side is Senator **Bob Dole**'s savvy chief of staff, **Sheila Burke**. A former nurse and one of the few Hill staffers who gained her health care policy expertise in the field, Burke is the one who will make good on Dole's reluctant promise to participate in health care reform. Dole—who sits on the Finance Committee—*and* Moynihan look to Burke for her in-depth knowledge of the subject. She has been called "health care reform's other woman" because her influence almost matches **Hillary Rodham Clinton**'s. No knee-jerk partisan, Burke has worked for Dole since 1979 and is considered much more liberal than her boss. If a bipartisan bill is drafted this summer in the Finance Committee, it will have Burke's handwriting all over it. . . .

While O'Donnell and Burke focus on the 20 Finance Committee members, **George Mitchell**'s chief of staff, **John Hilley**, has all 100 senators in his sights. Mitchell says he gave up the Supreme Court in order to pass a health care bill, and now it is up to Hilley to take pulses. He knows more about the needs, wants, and political inclinations of all 100 senators than any other staffer, and Hilley is Mitchell's most reliable idea person. When the majority leader floated three new variations on the employer mandate at the Senate Democrats' Colonial Williamsburg retreat in late spring, Hilley was the one who had put the pitch together. On the ground, his job now will be to blend the bills that will probably come out of Finance and Labor and Human Resources—a blend that, hopefully, will navigate its way around a Republican filibuster. . . .

Meanwhile, Senator **Jay Rockefeller** has emerged as the Clinton plan's most steadfast and enthusiastic backer, defending the **Hillary/Magaziner** program against all comers. By his side daily is his communications director, **Laura Quinn**, who is thought to be—next to Rockefeller—the Hill's most knowledgeable expert on the Clinton bill. Quinn is a shrewd operator with firsthand political and policy experience in virtually every corner of the Democratic party: She's worked for the Brookings Institution, **Tom Bradley**, **Gary Hart**, **Jesse Jackson**, and **Joe Biden**. . . .

For single-payer fans, the woman to cheer is **Ellen Shaffer**, a legislative assistant for Senator

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The congressional staffers who are calling the shots on health care

Paul Wellstone, who helped write the single-payer bill and is considered the Senate's premier mental health expert. If the tide ever turns in favor of a Canadian-style system, Shaffer will be at the forefront. Now, she's slugging it out, along with other single-payer advocates, to make sure the Clintons and those to their right don't break their promise to pass real universal coverage. . . .

On the House side, a few key staffers will nudge the bills through committee. **David Abernethy**, a longtime health policy expert, looms behind **Sam Gibbons** and (the now indicted) **Dan Rostenkowski** on Ways and Means. He is the staff director of the committee's health subcommittee, chaired by **Pete Stark**, the first to declare Clinton's critical health alliances (purchasing cooperatives of individuals and businesses that the president argues are essential for cost control) dead on arrival. **Donald Shriber**, counsel to the Energy and Commerce Committee, is Chairman **John Dingell**'s right-hand man on health as Dingell tries to find a way to finance reform without a national income or sales tax. (This would mean complicated employer mandates and exemptions for small businesses.) Shriber, who has a public health degree, is the staffer Dingell most counts on to calculate both the real and the political costs of the mandates. . . .

Also an unseen but longtime power on Energy and Commerce: **Karen Nelson**, the Health and Environment subcommittee staff director, laboring under the aegis of Chairman **Henry Waxman**. Nelson, who has worked on health care policy since the 1970s, prepped for the battle for national health reform by becoming the number one Washington expert on Medicaid. She will be gloved and gowned by Medicare expert **Michael Hash** and fellow Medicaid expert **Andrea Schneider**. . . .

Abortion is likely to be one of health care reform's biggest headaches. As bills go through committees, liberal members are waging a behind-the-scenes fight for the inclusion of abortion coverage in the benefits package. Abortion opponents, not surprisingly, have vowed to fight coverage to the bitter end, arguing that most Americans do not want their tax dollars to pay to end pregnancies. Leading the influential women's charge for abortion coverage is 27-year-old **Heather Howard**, a legislative assistant for Representative **Nita Lowey** of New York. Lowey is the women's caucus pro-choice task force chair, and Howard is Lowey's chief pro-choice strategist. She successfully juggles the conflicting wishes of the pro-choice interest groups and pro-choice members of Congress. **Leslie Primmer** and **Susan Wood**, senior staff members for the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, are also deeply involved in the emotionally charged minutiae of abortion politics. They are also the brains behind female members' efforts to include adequate mammogram coverage in the benefits package. . . .

Speaker **Tom Foley** has designated Majority Leader **Dick Gephardt** as the Democratic leadership's point man on health care. Which means that **Andrea "Andie" King**, Gephardt's health care guru, is one of the most important staff members in Congress. When the Ways and Means, Education and Labor, and Energy and Commerce committees pass their different bills, King will be responsible for stitching together a compromise the Democratic leadership can support and try to pass. King is an important liaison between the different factions in the Democratic Party who want their say, from **Jim McDermott**'s 90 single-payer votes to **Jim Cooper**'s managed competition crowd. She knows who will vote for which bill, and how to get their votes. . . .

Finally, **George Crawford**, the staff director of the Rules Committee, will help implement King's compromise legislation by determining which amendments will be attached to all of the health care bills before they reach the House floor for a vote. The Rules Committee, chaired by **Joe Moakley** of Massachusetts, is a powerful insiders' group that's essentially a tool of the Democratic leadership. Crawford, who has worked on the committee for 12 years, knows legislative maneuvers like a third-base coach knows bunt signals. He will make sure the Rules Committee protects the chief Democratic bill from damaging amendments. . . .

—Clara Bingham

Clara Bingham is writing a book on women in Congress for Times Books.

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The Company They Keep

How the C.I.A.'s clubby, insular culture yields little valuable intelligence and gave us Aldrich Ames

BY DAVID CORN

A few years ago, several senior officials of the Central Intelligence Agency gathered in a conference room at Langley to ponder the worst situation an intelligence service can confront. One by one, the Company's agents in the Soviet bloc—spies code named Tickle, Blizzard, Gentile, and Pyrrhic—had been uncovered and apprehended by the Communists. Those picked up included the London station chief of the K.G.B., a Red Army general, and most of the C.I.A.'s top Soviet agents of the 1980s. HUMINT (spy talk for human intelligence) operations in Russia, the primary target of the C.I.A., were in ruins. And no one knew why. As the top intellicrats of the U.S. government scratched their heads, one jokingly remarked, "Well, someone in this room must be a mole." Everyone laughed at the preposterous notion—including a C.I.A. veteran named Aldrich Hazen Ames.

The arrest of Rick Ames, chief of the Soviet counterintelligence branch, provoked outrage from national security hawks and derision from C.I.A. critics. Both groups had the same question: How the hell could the Agency have not caught on to Ames' espionage when he was driving a Jaguar, buying a fancy house with $540,000 in cash, hacking into C.I.A. computers, lying to his superiors about his overseas travels, and having trouble passing lie detector tests? Part of the answer—one that nobody has paid attention to—is that the C.I.A. is far too much of a private club, one in which its members take care of each other and pledge allegiance to their own community. This clubbiness protected Ames who, as the son of a C.I.A. officer, was a legacy. In addition to posing a security problem, the clique mentality that protected Ames for so long also prevents the Agency and its outsider overseers from dealing with the shortcomings, large and small, of the C.I.A.

All government bureaucracies perpetuate a certain exclusivity. But shrouded in secrecy, the C.I.A.—like other spy services—is culturally more insular than most agencies. Such secrecy is bound to have an effect: It draws members of the club

David Corn, Washington editor of The Nation, *is author of* Blond Ghost: Ted Shackley and the C.I.A.'s Crusades, *to be published this October by Simon and Schuster.*

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closer together and further distances them from the civilian, non-secret world. (In the Ames case, the outside world included the spy-hunters of the F.B.I., from whom the C.I.A. withheld information regarding Ames' worrisome encounters with a lie detector.) Two directors of Central Intelligence have noted (in their memoirs) the deleterious effect of such clandestine bonding. William Colby, director from 1973 to 1976, observed that many C.I.A. people dropped out of non-Agency society and immersed themselves "exclusively in the cloak-and-dagger life." They formed "a real fraternity. . . . They increasingly separated themselves from the ordinary world and developed a rather skewed view of that world. . . . And out of that grew. . . an inbred, distorted, elitist view of intelligence that held it to be above the normal processes of society, with its own rationale and justification, beyond the restraints of the Constitution, which applied to everything and everyone else."

Stansfield Turner, President Carter's much maligned C.I.A. director, mused on the impact of a covert life: "Hiding your accomplishments, leading a double life, regularly facing moral issues. . . can all take their toll. In many ways, a clandestine career can be said to deform the person involved." And the institution itself.

In the course of writing a book on one long-time, highly decorated, and highly controversial C.I.A. officer, Theodore Shackley, I have interviewed more than 100 former Agency employees. I found many to be intelligent and thoughtful, as well as candid about the failings of the Agency. But what is striking is the number of stories I heard in which one or more Agency employees realized that something was wrong with Agency operations but did nothing about it.

It comes as no surprise that a bureaucracy—and as a bureaucracy the C.I.A. probably has more in common with the U.S. Department of Agriculture than it does not—is populated with people who adhere to a get-along philosophy. Yet in the C.I.A. the natural bureaucratic impulse to protect the institution is compounded by the bond of secrecy. And a culture is spawned that shields the Agency from F.B.I. investigators, congressional busybodies (who are supposed to watch over the intelligence community), and citizens who seek assurances that behind the veil nothing too untoward is being done in their name and with their tax dollars.

The more closed a community, the more difficult it is for its members to pursue allegations of wrongdoing and to speak out. One good example of this principle is a minor episode that occurred early in Shackley's career. In the mid-1950s, Shackley, who as a young officer had impressed his C.I.A. superiors, was posted to Berlin, the most prestigious overseas assignment available at the time. William Harvey, a legendary officer, ran the base where hundreds of Agency employees mounted operations to recruit spies behind the Iron Curtain. Shackley was in charge of a group of case officers who targeted Poland and Czechoslovakia. Their successes were few. Most of the C.I.A.'s Soviet bloc espionage work in the 1950s amounted to little more than dubious, doubled, or dead agents.

Shackley, though, managed to find a Polish source who provided a steady stream of information—nothing grand, yet useful nonetheless. But two fellow C.I.A. officers who had been transferred from Berlin complained to a base chief in another German city that Shackley was overplaying the operation, that the agent had not

Sean Kelly

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always said what Shackley reported. "I stewed about this for a long time," the base chief recalled in an interview with me. "A snowstorm of reports came out of this agent, and these guys said Shackley was making them up. . . . I can't think of any higher crime for an intelligence officer. If you can't have integrity, you may as well not have an intelligence agency."

But what to do? The base chief realized that if he raised a flap he would be in a losing game. Shackley would deny he had rigged the intelligence to make himself look good. Harvey could be expected to scream and remind all that he had booted the two accusers from the Berlin post. The base chief, who did not speak Polish, was in no position to conduct an independent evaluation. He considered bumping the whole problem to his superiors in Washington. But, he figured, they would only face the same no-win situation. The base chief let it go. He knew that an intelligence service attracts ambitious people, trains them to be duplicitous, assigns them tasks that are not amenable to intrusive oversight, and so must rely on their personal integrity. To do anything to question the integrity of an officer was to question the most crucial aspect of the system, and he was not willing to do that. There the matter ended. Had the charges been true—and they may have been—Shackley's career should have ended. Instead, he went on to positions of great influence where he was responsible for intelligence in some of the most significant hotspots of the Cold War—Miami, Laos, and Vietnam.

Decades later, Turner discovered that there was still much internal reluctance to coming down too hard on a fellow member of the club. Five weeks after he took over the C.I.A. in 1977, he was flabbergasted to read in *The Washington Post* that Edwin Wilson, a C.I.A. official who had become a rogue arms dealer with ties to Libyan strongman Muammar Qaddafi, still had active connections with Agency officials. Two mid-level officers had aided Wilson's business deals, and a pair of senior officers (including Shackley, then the associate deputy director for operations) had regularly socialized with him. Turner demanded that the inspector general's office, the Agency's internal watchdog unit, investigate.

Turner was more shocked to learn that months before, during the tenure of C.I.A. chief George Bush, the I.G. had examined this and learned of Wilson's relationship with the C.I.A. men. No one previously had alerted Turner to this; no one had done anything; no one even seemed concerned. Turner whistled into his office the top officials of the Agency: deputy director E. Henry Knoche, deputy director for operations William Wells, I.G. John Waller, Shackley, and others. Gentlemen, Turner said, the question is what to do about the two C.I.A. employees who had worked with Wilson. The choices were exoneration, punishment, or dismissal. All the career Agency officials suggested a modest punishment, arguing that dismissal would demoralize the Agency. Only Robert "Rusty" Williams, a C.I.A. outsider brought in by Turner to be his executive assistant, favored canning the pair. Turner stared at his senior aides—he could not believe their attitude—and said sarcastically, "Majority wins. They're fired." (Turner did not officially punish Shackley for his contacts with Wilson, but he eventually transferred him to a less influential post.) It was an eye-opening moment for Turner. These fellows, he thought, are too damned protective of each other.

Spy Anxiety

In researching a small but significant slice of C.I.A. history, I came across several instances of officers covering up for other members of the fraternity. When a base chief in Vietnam was caught fabricating agents and padding his expenses, he was allowed to pay back the funds but was not turned over to the Justice Department. In 1973, Shackley, then chief of the Western Hemisphere Division, had to deal with a Senate subcommittee investigating a 1970 C.I.A. and I.T.T. plot to undermine Salvador Allende, the democratically elected Marxist president of Chile. When Shackley ordered a subordinate to arrange for an I.T.T. official to testify falsely—this I.T.T. official later pleaded guilty to lying to Congress—Shackley's deputy chief opposed the move but did nothing to stop it. In Laos in the mid-1960s, Shackley, then chief of station there, engineered a military engagement that was a complete disaster: Over 2,000 Laotian soldiers were lost in a battle against the North Vietnamese Army and the Communist Pathet Lao forces. Afterward, he re-

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ported to Washington that the fault lay with the Laotian commanders—not the plan he had supported. But one of the C.I.A.'s best Laotian hands wrote his own report noting that Shackley had pushed on the Laotian military a plan that knowledgeable people in Laos had predicted would fail. Instead of sending his report to Langley, this officer put it in his safe and then later burned it. He felt there was no point in snitching on Shackley, who was rising fast through the ranks. No one in Washington, he believed, would bother to listen.

The covert world's clannishness allows its members not only a little slack. It also keeps one of the club's biggest secrets under wraps. Ames, though, shared this secret when he pleaded guilty to espionage and tax evasion in a federal district court outside Washington in April. After expressing regret for his treachery, he cited two factors that led him to betray his country. First, he had "come to dissent" from U. S. national security policy and the decades-long shift to the right in American politics. Second—and here comes the secret—Ames had concluded that "the espionage business, as carried out by the C.I.A. and a few other American agencies, was and is a self-serving sham, carried out by careerist bureaucrats who have managed to deceive several generations of American policy makers and the public about both the necessity and value of their work." Thousands of case officers and tens of thousands of agents around the world, Ames maintained, have been spinning their wheels. "The information our vast espionage network acquires at considerable human and ethical costs," he charged, "is generally insignificant or irrelevant to our policy makers' needs. Our espionage establishment differs hardly at all from many other federal bureaucracies, having transformed itself into a self-serving interest group immeasurably aided by secrecy."

The covert world's clannishness keeps one of the club's biggest secrets under wraps. As Ames stated in federal district court, "Our espionage establishment differs hardly at all from many other federal bureaucracies, having transformed itself into a self-serving interest group immeasurably aided by secrecy."

It is too bad that it took a traitor to reveal the most important secret held by the secret-keepers. Ames certainly has no love lost for the Agency, but his words have the ring of truth. After Ames' statement, Representative Dan Glickman, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, noted that the mole's comments should not be ignored. Glickman and Senator Dennis DeConcini, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, both contacted Ames' lawyer and asked if Ames would testify before their committees. (Those appearances have been put off until the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. finish debriefing Ames.) The lawmakers' request was greeted by hoots from the spy world. Richard Helms, a former C.I.A. director, denounced the prospect of "having a traitor on the Hill to vent his spleen. . . . I deplore it." Incumbent Director of Central Intelligence R. James Woolsey decried "the fact that some people would take Ames seriously as an authority on the C.I.A. and what its value is."

On the subject of the C.I.A.'s effectiveness and worth, many Agency veterans I interviewed said more or less the same thing as Ames did. Few put it in such harsh terms. But they acknowledged they had spent decades in the espionage netherworld and never accomplished much—and had not seen colleagues do any better. But you always had to look busy. So if you're a C.I.A. case officer based in Colombia and can't bag a Soviet official as a spy, then you have to come up with something else: perhaps penetrate the local communist party, bribe a journalist to reveal his or her sources, or recruit

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the capital's police chief. Most of this mattered little, but it gave the impression the C.I.A. was busy prosecuting the Cold War.

In key theaters, the C.I.A. compiled a poor performance record on espionage. In the 1950s, it flopped miserably in its efforts to recruit truly significant Soviet bloc spies. In the 1960s, it failed to infiltrate Fidel Castro's ruling class. (Some C.I.A. veterans claim that the espionage program run by its Miami station, which was headed by the seemingly ubiquitous Shackley, discovered evidence that the Soviets were installing missiles in Cuba in 1962, but the Agency's own historical records indicate that the telling information came from a routine interview with a Cuban refugee conducted at an Army processing center in Florida.)

Intelligence in Vietnam was a bust. The C.I.A. never penetrated the higher reaches of the enemy, nor did the Agency fully convey the weaknesses of the Saigon regime to Washington. (Its analysts in Langley did consistently and correctly predict that Lyndon Johnson's bombing campaign would fail to win the war—unless the bombing was greatly intensified.) In a 1991 interview with an oral historian, Richard Helms, discussing the C.I.A. in Vietnam, offered a stunning indictment: "We were dealing with a complicated cultural and ethnic problem which we never came to understand. In other words, it was our ignorance or innocence, if you will, which led us to misassess, not comprehend, and make a lot of wrong decisions." How reassuring: The C.I.A.—like the rest of the national security bureaucracy—bungled cluelessly during the most important and bloody conflict of the Cold War. And on the all-important targets of the Soviet Union and China, the Agency gathered few agents who made a great difference. Its espionage failed to uncover the true secret of the mighty Soviet empire: It was hollow.

Agents have to look busy. So if you're a C.I.A. officer based in Colombia and you can't bag a Soviet official as a spy, then you have to come up with something else: perhaps penetrate the local communist party or recruit the capital's police chief. Most of this mattered little, but it gave the impression the C.I.A. was busy prosecuting the Cold War.

It is easy to bash the Agency. Its advocates always offer up the familiar chestnut: Everyone knows our failures, no one knows our successes. But any evidence of significant success is quite hard to come by. And it's not difficult to find Agency veterans who offer no such evidence.

Standing before a judge and wearing prison garb, the fallen Ames observed, "Now that the Cold War is over and the Communist tyrannies are largely done for, our country still awaits a real national debate on the means and ends—and costs—of our national security policies. . . . To the extent that public discussions of my case can move from government-inspired hypocrisy and hysteria to help even indirectly to fuel such a debate, I welcome and support it."

He is right: A public discussion of how and why the United States spies is desperately needed. Now if the defenders of the clandestine status quo were smart, they actually would be happy to see Ames testify before Congress on the perils of the clubby covert culture. Members of the spy set might even want to encourage that behind the scenes. For if they could link the call for evaluation and change to a despised turncoat whose acts of betrayal caused deaths, perhaps they could forestall a debate that, if conducted honestly and openly, the die-hard protectors of the C.I.A. and its budget would find tough to win. □

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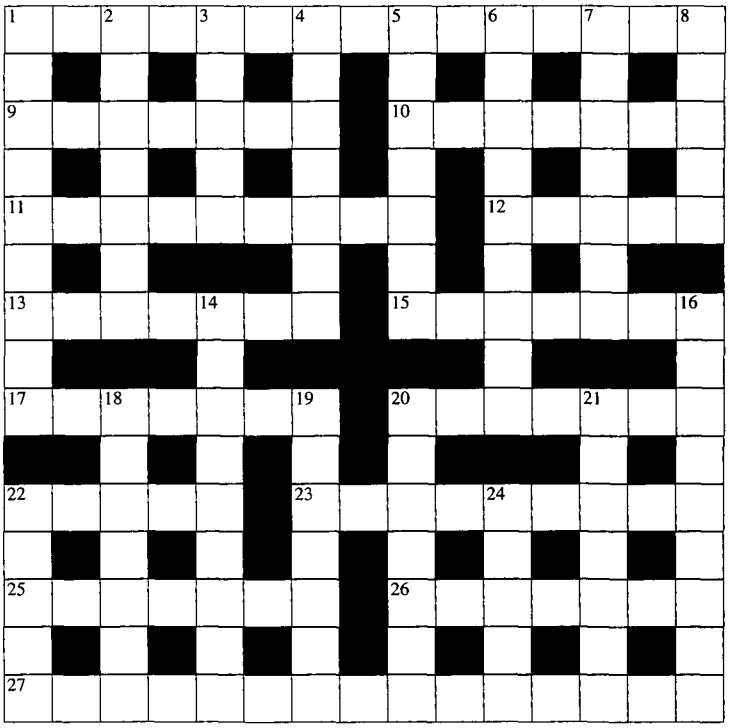
Political Puzzle

BY JOHN BARCLAY

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



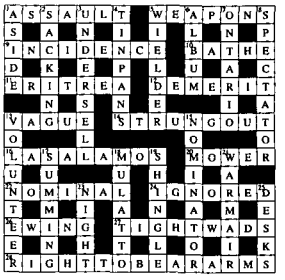
ACROSS

1. Y celebration? (3, 6, 2, 4)
9. Making cut in scarlet chin garment. (7)
10. Revolutionary at natal home of the braves. (7)
11. Stale sets arranged in very dull way. (9)
12. Hockey player in beginning to hatch. (5)
13. Deny lap turn for bridge maneuver. (7)
15. Niece is put on as part of an act. (5, 2)
17. Overplay top school turn in lot. (3, 2, 2)
20. Nausea said to be treated. (7)
22. Class grade turning East. (5)
23. Monster sporting an evil hat. (9)
25. One girl in 199 is traditional. (7)
26. Follow former President on way back from East. (7)
27. Need candy deep in mix for 1 Across. (12, 3)

DOWN

1. Pitched white tent for century. (9)
2. Missing wrongly-cued sex. (7)
3. Green voile (woven). (5)
4. Straightened up egg yard sometimes before Ann. (7)
5. Special purpose vehicles curiously are "she's." (7)
6. Novel of Orwell's students. (9)
7. Even run more awkardly to upset. (7)
8. Desire period of time before end of vacation. (5)
14. Starts shower swirling thru pales. (7, 2)
16. Fashions style 9 with great concentration. (9)
18. Fictional colonel finds ace in the dirt. (7)
19. Water bird set in place. (7)
20. Differing form of revised. (7)
21. Hun read about lost voice. (7)
22. Take steps in 101 plants. (5)
24. Lofty greek. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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Just the Facts

Sure, Bob Woodward can tell you what happened. But don't ask him to explain why it matters

BY JAMES FALLOWS

The Agenda: Inside the Clinton White House
Bob Woodward, *Simon and Schuster, $24*

Before complaining about this book let me acknowledge its virtues. They start with the virtuous way in which Bob Woodward has conducted his career. At any point in the last two decades, Woodward could easily have decided that he was tired of working so hard. He could have turned into a bigfoot pundit and dined out for the rest of his life on the afterglow from *All the President's Men*, *The Brethren*, or *Veil*. Instead he has kept at it, with his dogged interviewing and cross-checking of sources. There certainly are worse role models in today's news business.

The subject of the book is worthy, too. For at least a dozen years, since the early Reagan era, journalists have nodded and agreed that the federal budget is a really important subject, which someone should take seriously—preferably somebody else. Campaign coverage, the cherished White House beat, foreign postings, and talk-show opinionating were all more glamorous. Near the end of the Bush administration, Woodward apparently decided that he would try to delve into and explain the story of economic policy in the way he'd explored the obviously sexy secrets of the Supreme Court and the C.I.A.

Woodward has been thorough and careful; as of this writing, a week after the book's appearance, none of its subjects has challenged any of his major factual claims. To any Washington reporter it is amazing that Woodward has gotten so many insiders to speak freely so early in a president's term. This is easy late in an administration, when the people with inside knowledge start worrying about their next career berth. Woodward seems to have sped up the cycle through his own "Deep Throat" reputation for stony secrecy about his sources and by working with so many sources that much of the information can't be traced to a single leaker. Experienced newspaper readers can usually pick out the origin of catty blind quotes by asking who is hurt and who is helped by each revelation. Only in a few cases do Woodward's stories bear this sort of obvious fingerprint. Mostly, he seems to have found the original memo or tracked down all the participants in a meeting so that he can combine and compare their accounts.

The few stories with fingerprints fall into the "Al Haig was troubled. . . " genre. Haig, who was White House chief of staff during Richard Nixon's second term, seemed a probable major source for Woodward and Carl Bernstein's Watergate books, since in so many cases he was portrayed as being conscience-struck and troubled by the criminality emerging around him. In *The Agenda* we have David Gergen often seeming troubled about signs of partisanship and disorganization in the Clinton White House. More surprising, since Gergen is hardly a longtime Clinton loyalist, we occasionally see George Stephanopoulos in "troubled" mode, sighing about the president's imperfections. The overall portrait of Stephanopoulos, however, emphasizes his competence and his diehard loyalty.

Woodward suggests that Hillary Clinton has more influence over her husband than any other

James Fallows, a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly, *is Washington editor of* The Atlantic Monthly *and the author, most recently, of* Looking at the Sun.

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one person, although like everyone else so far he has been thwarted in trying to find out exactly how she exercises power, and to what end. He mildly mocks Al Gore, whom he shows scurrying to have the seat right next to Clinton at every meeting or event. But the book provides impressive evidence of Gore's playing legislative hardball to help enact the administration's plans and fighting consistently for his environmental principles. Woodward also shows Gore making sophisticated economic arguments—for example, pointing out that previous tight-money campaigns by the Federal Reserve board, designed to choke off inflation, had occasionally backfired and increased the inflation rate. The people who come out the worst in the book are the White House chief of staff, Mack McLarty, who is portrayed as being weak and completely out of his depth; Paul Begala, the campaign strategist, who badmouths many of his associates when they aren't listening (but Woodward is); and David Boren, the senator from Oklahoma, one of several vacillating legislators who nearly killed Clinton's budget plan in 1993. One quiet hero, to my mind, is Robert Rubin, who is portrayed as running the National Economic Council in a fair and effective way.

As for its portrayal of the president himself, the book will probably reinforce the view each reader already holds. Those who hate everything about Clinton will find new evidence that he is slippery and untrustworthy. After all, he ran on the promise of a middle class tax cut, and the book suggests that he knew he could never carry that promise out. His assistants are always squabbling, and he seems willing to give up anything to get one of his bills through Congress. Readers like me, who start out more sympathetic to Clinton, will find many illustrations of his intelligence, his resilience, his energy, his deftness at every political operation from backroom arm-twisting to speechmaking on TV, and his determination to make the most of his years in office.

The Agenda's most damaging revelation about the president is its emphasis on Bill Clinton's temper tantrums toward his aides. When right-wingers attack Clinton for his womanizing or military history, the answer is: In 1992, voters knew or suspected the worst on these fronts, and they elected him anyway. The voters didn't know about his bitter outbursts. "I want him dead, dead," Clinton raged ("in blind fury," according to Woodward) about a staffer who had screwed up a campaign stop in 1992. "I want him killed, I want him horsewhipped."

Clinton's closet aides, especially Stephanopolous, have apparently learned that these tempests pass without permanent effect. When Clinton finally tracked down the aide who he had wanted "dead, dead," he merely said, "I hope he gets a real talking to." But one can easily see how those who do not know Clinton well could be shaken by his rage and discouraged from speaking up when dissent is called for.

What's the problem with this book? Two trademarks of Woodward's journalism become liabilities in *The Agenda*.

One is his tone of omniscient narrative. Woodward asks us to trust him that the material is right. He provides not a single footnote, attribution, source, or any other bit of bolstering for his version of the truth. (Because he's heard complaints like this before, Woodward says he will turn over all his notes for the book to the Yale library, where they will be open for inspection in 40 years. Harry Truman lived to be 88. If Bill Clinton does the same, he will have a chance to see the notes himself.) Woodward presents a seamless account, looking into the actions and thoughts of multiple characters, just as if he were a panoramic novelist—all the while asking us to trust that every bit of it is true.

Generally I do trust Woodward. He's earned that through his track record, and most of what he says in this book rings true. But most is not all. By insisting on writing the entire book as if he did know every detail—including thoughts, emotions, motives—Woodward inevitably gets into situations in which he is writing things he cannot know.

The book opens with a scene of Bill and Hillary Clinton in their bedroom, in Little Rock, discussing in 1991 whether he should make the run. "I think you have to do it," Hillary begins, and Woodward takes us through a dozen lines of verbatim dialogue. They emphasize the message of change that Clinton wants to bring to the country, and Hillary's apprehension about the personal price they will have to pay.

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Now, there are only two people in the world (we hope) who could have heard this conversation. Bob Woodward is not one of them. What he knows, at best, is what either Bill or Hillary Clinton told him about their discussion that day. It is conceivable that one or the other of them accurately remembered all the back-and-forth of their conversation. Perhaps one of them immediately jotted it down in a diary, aware that it might be a historic moment. But precisely because it was a historic moment—part of this political couple's explanation of why they wanted to run—Woodward can never know whether it actually happened that way, or whether this was a prettied-up recollection from two parties with a shared interest in improving the story.

The bedroom episode itself is of little importance, and if Woodward had merely said, "Months later Bill Clinton recalled that he had told his wife, 'Gee, Hillary. . .'" he would have been within the limits of what he actually knew. Yet Woodward allows almost no distinctions in levels of truth in this book. He asks us to take it all as if it were hard, established fact.

Much of the narrative presumably is hard fact. The most reliable episodes are those based on memos Woodward is quoting or meetings involving many participants. People do take notes at meetings, especially in the White House. When a lot of people are present, errors or biases in their recollections tend to cancel out. The least reliable moments in the book, which occur on nearly every page, come when Woodward tells us what some figure "thought" or "felt" or "feared."

Woodward does not know what these people thought or felt. He knows what they told him or some other person, after the fact, about their beliefs or emotions at the crucial moment. That is not the same thing. Yet he refuses to make any concession to the limits of after-the-fact journalistic knowledge. "The worst of [the economic officials], Begala felt, was Leon Panetta." "Carville felt like sliding under the table after Clinton's remark." "After the initial humiliation, Stephanopoulos felt liberated in his new job." And on and on. This assertion of inner knowledge is, of course, not unique to Woodward. Historians and biographers use it; magazine and newspaper writers may employ it in profiles of one or two characters. What is unusual in Woodward's work is his application of it to a large cast of characters—and his utter refusal to indicate how he knows anything he is presenting as truth. He would strengthen the authority of the material that he undoubtedly does know if he allowed shadings in his voice-of-God tone. It would involve the slightest of changes—"the worst of them, Begala later said he felt"—yet would represent an enormous cumulative increase in trustworthiness.

Woodward's other distinctive trait is his pose of rigid fair-mindedness. He does not judge; he reports and describes. In publicizing this book Woodward has been at pains to say that he is neither a political scientist, nor a historian, nor an economist. He does not presume to assess the wisdom of the Clinton economic program or the effectiveness of the Clinton White House compared to its predecessors. He just wants to tell us what he saw and heard.

That's fine, to a degree. I believe Woodward to be a genuinely fair-minded man. (I was surprised to hear him say, in a radio interview, that he had voted for Clinton in 1992. Somehow I had not pictured him doing anything so partisan as casting a vote.) But Woodward's refusal to assess, judge, or take sides finally leads him to take sides in an involuntary and destructive way.

The narrative center of the book is the struggle to pass the administration's 1993 economic plan. The separate struggles it recounts take place on wildly different levels. Some of them involve pure housekeeping or turf matters. Did the Clinton congressional liaison office return phone calls on time? Did some White House underling contact a congressman without telling the congressional liaison office? Woodward chronicles numerous glitches of this sort, without indicating whether they're more or less prevalent than in any other era. (Based on my experience in the Carter administration, the Clinton team seems to work more smoothly, but perhaps that doesn't sound like a compliment.)

Some of the struggles involve classic legislative maneuvering. Can the Republicans hold together enough votes for a filibuster? What will it take for Clinton to peel off a few Republicans? Other struggles are among cabinet departments for shares of the fixed budgetary pie.

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Some are about the slogans and packaging that should be used to sell both Clinton the president and his economic plan. And yet other struggles, the ones that are ultimately most important, involve basic questions of economic policy.

Struggles in this last category are the ones that require explanation and assessment. During the Reagan administration, they turned on the "Do deficits matter?" question. (Reagan, of course, initially argued that cutting taxes would eliminate deficits—and when it didn't, he argued that raising taxes would be more harmful than tolerating the huge deficits.) At the start of the Clinton administration, they involved conflicting views of the most urgent economic goal. Was it more vital to get the deficit down as soon as possible (which meant restraining spending and raising taxes)? Or was it more important to increase "investment" and rev up the economy, to put people back to work?

Disagreements of this sort are on a completely different plane from arguments about missed phone calls, slow appointments, or wounded vanities. Yet Woodward, in his reluctance to "take sides," presents *all* disagreements and "confusions" in the Clinton administration as if they constituted one big mass of indistinguishable disorder. In his omniscient tone, he presents every sides' complaints—and since he's not willing to assess or dismiss any of them, they all have equal emphasis and add up to a tableau of White House "disarray." When Clinton neglects the Congress, one group of advisors worries that the president is too naive and detached to succeed in Washington—and Woodward reports their fears. When Clinton wheels and deals with the Congress, another group of advisors worries that he's selling out just like other politicians, and Woodward reports their fears, too.

Any fear will do. Woodward shows us George Mitchell, the Senate majority leader, complaining about a plan to freeze cost-of-living adjustments for Social Security. "This is wrong," Woodward quotes Mitchell as saying, and then paraphrases Mitchell's objection: "The typical Social Security recipient was an elderly woman with little or no other income, who just barely survived, he reminded them." Since he's just reporting, not taking sides, Woodward feels no obligation to point out that Mitchell's claim is preposterous. ($55 billion a year in Social Security benefits go to households with more than $50,000 in income.) Nevertheless, Clinton's attempt to curb the COLA—a sensible fiscal step if means tested to take it away only from the affluent—is presented as completely disposed of by Mitchell's objection.

A view of history emerges from this kind of "fairness." It crops up in a brief passage early in the book. As Clinton began appointing his economic staff, Woodward says, he "wanted someone who knew Wall Street and the bond market close to him in the White House." Woodward explains:

> One of the criticisms of Jimmy Carter had been his woeful lack of understanding and appreciation of the bond market. Carter had allowed interest rates to skyrocket, probably one of the mistakes that doomed his presidency.

The problem for Carter, of course, was not that he failed to "understand" or "appreciate" the bond market any more than Winston Churchill's problem was that he failed to "understand" or "appreciate" what was happening at Dunkirk. In each case an entire nation was subject to huge and destructive forces. In Carter's case it was the worldwide surge of inflation throughout the 1970s, which was initiated by a series of oil-price shocks and whose return Alan Greenspan fears even now. Carter "allowed" interest rates to skyrocket as Churchill "allowed" troops to retreat from Dunkirk—it was the best each of them could manage at the moment. The interest rate policy wasn't even Carter's doing. It was engineered by Paul Volcker, whose name does not appear in this book, when he took over the Federal Reserve Board in 1979.

In this kind of "fair" journalism, a mistake is a mistake is a mistake—bouts of temper, arguments over legislative strategy, historic shifts in economic fundamentals. This kind of fairness is actually foreshortening, reducing three dimensions to two. It distorts and limits the story that Woodward invested so much time trying to tell. Maybe we wouldn't like a more openly judgmental, less deadpan Woodward if he appeared. But for his next book I'm willing to take that risk. □

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Watergate Redux

A British reporter offers the most detailed account to date of the break-in and its aftermath—and an object lesson in how to tell a complicated story

BY J. ANTHONY LUKAS

Watergate: The Corruption of American Politics and the Fall of Richard Nixon
Fred Emery, *Times Books, $27.50*

"There was a whiff of the Gestapo in the chill October air," Fred Emery, then the Washington bureau chief of the *Times* of London, wired his newspaper after Richard Nixon accepted the resignations of his attorney general and deputy attorney general, dismissed the Watergate special prosecutor, and sent a squad of FBI men in to seal off the prosecutor's office, preventing its stunned staff from taking materials home.

Some in London thought his comparison of the 1973 Saturday Night Massacre to the activities of Adolf Hitler's secret police a bit "excessive," Emery recalls now. Since the skeptics, he suggests, included the paper's editor, William Rees-Mogg, one can imagine with some relish the cables on that subject flashing back and forth across the Atlantic. But Emery thought his arresting comparison perfectly apt, and was pleased to find some time later that Leon Jaworski, who replaced Archibald Cox as special prosecutor, had the same reaction that eventful Saturday evening.

Now, two decades after Watergate and its cover-up compelled Nixon's resignation, the indignant Mr. Emery has written a devastating indictment of the 37th president and his inner circle that goes a long way toward supporting that disputed Gestapo metaphor. Indeed, perhaps more than any book that has yet appeared on this much-chronicled subject, *Watergate* presents a bleak portrait of the chief executive who—in Jaworski's words—violated his presidential oath "by transforming the Oval Office into a mean den where perjury and low scheming became a way of life."

After the warm bath of forgiveness that attended Nixon's funeral this spring, Emery's book and the recently published *Haldeman Diaries* are icy plunges into reality, stern correctives in our assessment of a president who betrayed the trust of the American people.

The project grew out of Emery's work on a BBC-TV program about the fall of another leader, Margaret Thatcher. A young associate, after listening to Emery's Watergate stories, said: "We have to tell it again." Four years later, this bears fruit in a television series to air this summer on the Disney Channel and in Emery's simultaneously released book.

Series and book are nourished by fresh interviews with such Watergate principals as G. Gordon Liddy, John Dean, Charles Colson, Alfred C. Baldwin, Eugenio R. Martinez, Howard Baker, Archibald Cox, Robert Bork, Leonard Garment, Gerald Ford, Robert Reisner, and Sey-

J. Anthony Lukas is the author of Nightmare: The Underside of the Nixon Years *(1976).*

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mour Glanzer. Emery also draws on some recently released White House tapes and a host of primary sources, all of which greatly enrich his narrative.

Despite his assiduous research, Emery's account does not significantly alter the broad outlines of the Watergate story as it has come down to us across these two decades (with the exception of a hitherto unreported, and ultimately fruitless, offer by John Mitchell to accept responsibility for Watergate, and to plead guilty, in exchange for the special prosecutor's pledge to eschew further pursuit of the president). Indeed, the net effect of this volume is to reassert the main themes of the Watergate story against certain revisionist efforts that have excited attention in recent years.

John Mitchell and Richard Nixon: Hatching "White House Horrors"?

An article in *The New York Times* suggests that the BBC-TV series was inspired, in part, by a provocative theory about what was really behind the Watergate break-in, presented in 1991 by independent journalists Len Colodny and Robert Gettlin in their best-selling book, *Silent Coup* (and originally explored by Jim Hougan in his maverick 1984 account, *Secret Agenda*). The Colodny-Gettlin book suggests that one major reason for the Watergate burglaries was efforts by then-White House Counsel John Dean to uncover—and presumably exploit politically—dealings between the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate complex and a call girl operation located across the street in the Columbia Plaza apartment complex.

Silent Coup was roughly treated by some well-credentialed critics, in part because it was seen as an effort to exculpate Nixon and Mitchell and throw the blame for Watergate on the man whose testimony nearly sealed the president's doom—Dean.

But others were intrigued, among them the most tenacious of our investigative reporters, Seymour Hersh. The "revelations" of *Silent Coup* were among the factors that led Hersh several years ago to sign a major book contract for a fresh look at Watergate. Hersh has now abandoned that book and says today that he was unable to confirm most of the central tenets of the Colodny-Gettlin version.

Emery is even more disdainful of *Secret Coup*. Archly noting an "alleged connection between a . . . call-girl operation and its links to White House and congressional personalities," he concludes that "hard evidence of the link to Watergate is lacking."

That two reporters as able as Hersh and Emery should find the "hooker theory" wanting does not—in and of itself—destroy the notion's credibility. Those of us who helped tell the Watergate story 20 years ago should, of course, beware any tendency to defend the received version against challenge by latecomers. I, for one, remain intrigued by the sleazy world of prostitutes and private eyes—the underside of the underside—which Colodny and Gettlin ex-

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plore in their book. Where it all leads I'm still not sure. I am still inclined to believe that the principal motive of the Watergate break-ins was to find out what DNC Chairman Larry O'Brien knew about Nixon's surreptitious dealings with Howard Hughes. But even at this relatively late date, we ought not close the door on fresh avenues of research that may help us better understand the full dimensions of the Watergate story.

I wish Emery had been less loftily dismissive and more eager to grapple with some of the Hougan-Colodny-Gettlin material: for example, the key to a DNC secretary's desk that was found on burglar Eugenio Martinez the night of the second Watergate break-in. Martinez said he had gotten the key from Howard Hunt, and presumably it would have provided access to a principal target of the burglary. But by the time police got around to opening the secretary's desk some days later, whatever the burglars wanted was apparently gone. Hougan stumbled across the key in the FBI archives and soon proclaimed it "quite literally, the key to the break-in." But, strangely enough, it never surfaced during the Ervin Committee hearings in the Senate or in the House Judiciary Committee deliberations; indeed, nobody I know had ever heard of it before Hougan's book.

Cover stories

Emery's focus, to be sure, is less on the arcana of the Watergate break-ins and other "White House horrors" (Mitchell's phrase) than on the cover-up. And here he is splendid. For what he brings to this intricate story is not just a high tolerance for, but a positive welcoming of, complexity and ambiguity—an object lesson to many American narrators, myself included.

True, Emery has at his disposal a far wider range of sources than did those of us who were writing more or less contemporaneously. Many participants in the story—notably Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Liddy, Cox, Alexander Haig, Robert Hartman, Richard Kleindienst, John Sirica, and Tony Ulasewicz—have published memoirs in the past few years. Newly released tapes have further complicated the story.

Emery displays an admirable ability to resist premature closure, to hold several versions of an event in his mind at once, and to divine—and explicate—the motives for each version.

Consider his multi-layered account of "the first top White House Watergate meeting," held in Ehrlichman's office at 9 a.m. on June 20, 1972—three days after the second Watergate break-in. The participants were Ehrlichman, Haldeman, Mitchell, Dean, and Deputy Attorney General Kleindienst (who fares particularly badly in this book), later joined by Assistant Attorney General Henry Petersen.

"All accounts make it seem to have been a falsely cheerful session," Emery begins.

> Dean's account was most sardonic. He wrote in *Blind Ambition* that the White House faction did not trust the Justice Department faction, and no one wanted to acknowledge how serious the problem might be. . . Kleindienst's version of this meeting is totally self-exculpatory. He later testified before the Senate Watergate committee that he and Petersen wanted Dean to know of their 'apprehension and the grave seriousness with which we received the news.'
>
> When Kleindienst left the two alone, Dean's version is that he told Petersen, 'I don't think the White House can stand a wide open investigation. . . there are all kinds of things that could blow up in our face.' Dean feared it could lead directly to the president.
>
> When Petersen later testified, he said he could not recall Dean saying anything about 'leading to the president'. . . Petersen's willingness to limit the prosecutor's authority to the break-in itself was just what they wanted. It was the key to containing the scandal.

Had this scene been written in the conventional style of American popular non-fiction, it would have been a seamless narrative, with the omniscient narrator utterly sure of where each participant stood and exactly what he said. Such scenes are cinematic, vibrant with dialogue, bursting with vivid characters, reeking of conflict. They are the building blocks of best-sellerdom.

But Emery's penchant for intricacy does not allow him to build this kind of scene. One wonders whether *Watergate*—even with the TV series to publicize it—will capture the public

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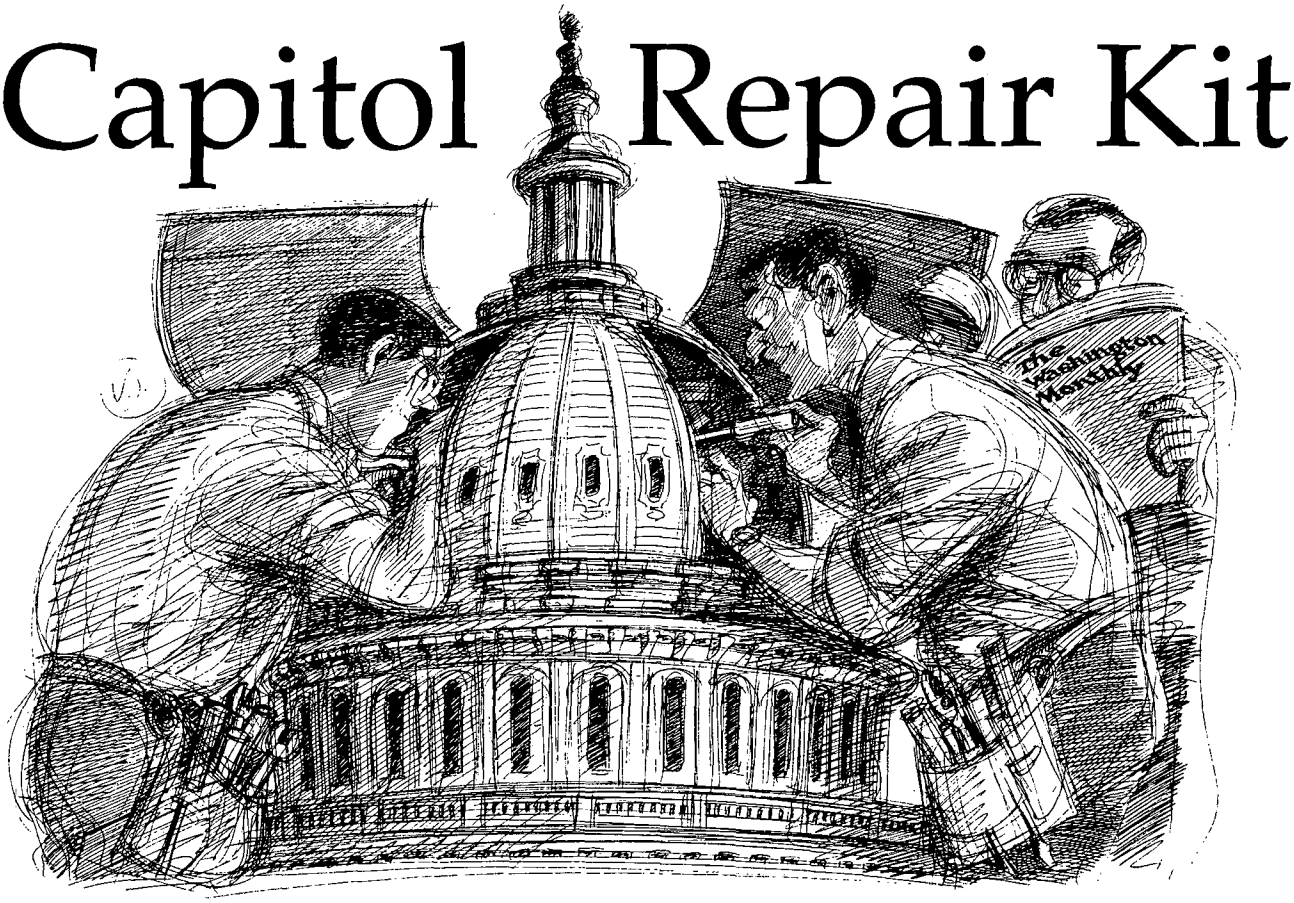

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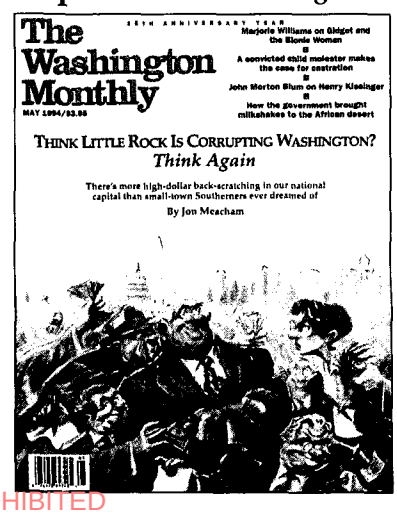

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imagination, much less "hit the list," as they say in New York publishing. Occasionally, Emery's reveling in complexity produces a sentence so clotted that the mind reels. But if this approach does not earn Emery a lot of money, it is brave and honest.

Above all, this is a reporter's book. As a reporter, I mean that as high praise. Not only has Emery done his legwork, talked to many of the participants, ransacked the archives, and listened to every available tape, but each page of his book gives evidence of a fresh reporter's eye and a shrewd reporter's skepticism. It is interesting to contrast this, the first reporter's book with some perspective on these events, with Stanley I. Kutler's *The Wars of Watergate*, the first work of a respected historian on the same events.

Kutler's book is full of praise for the men entrusted with uncovering the wrongdoing: Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl Silbert, his deputy Seymour Glanzer, and Petersen. "The U.S. Attorney's office," Kutler wrote, "had in fact discovered the cover-up conspiracy and had broken the case by the time Cox took control." Silbert's statement in autumn 1972 that "There is no evidence of a wider conspiracy" had "unfairly" subjected him to criticism. In effect, Kutler argues, the system worked.

Gatecrashers

Emery comes to a very different conclusion. *Watergate* is peppered with sardonic references to the failure of the prosecutors—indeed of the criminal justice system—until the press and Congress got into the act.

As early as June 1972, the FBI and the prosecutors were making "the first of their huge gaffes." That fall, the prosecutors "swallowed the cover story of Liddy's running Watergate on his own." They were "badly embarrassed" by James W. McCord's letter to the Judge Sirica which broke open the cover-up. Their failure to question Robert Reisner, Jeb Magruder's administrative assistant, was a "blunder." As late as April 1973—10 months after the break-in, a month after McCord's letter to Sirica—the prosecutors "still did not understand the immensity of the cover-up and the obstruction of justice that had been perpetuated," Emery writes.

But Emery is too committed to complexity to let blame rest there. That the White House almost got away with its plan to contain Watergate by loading all the blame on Gordon Liddy, argues Emery, "says little about their skill as liars and not much more about the gullibility of the FBI and the prosecutors. . . . The Nixon administration from the president down skillfully used and abused not only the powers but also the continuing presumption of office."

Finally, *Watergate* is the story of the reckless abuse of presidential power. At least twice in his concluding pages, Emery uses the term "breathtaking" to describe the atmosphere of an "underworld cabal" that had penetrated the Oval Office. Clearly, the gentleman from the *Times* was rendered breathless by the events of 1972-74. To his credit, he stayed with the story, sounded its true depth, and now has told it in a relentlessly discerning book that should make all Americans catch their breaths as well. □

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The Menendez Quandry

Our jury system used to work. Now it produces too many unjust verdicts. What's gone wrong and how can we fix it?

BY DANIEL FRANKLIN

The Jury: Disorder in the American Courts
Stephen J. Adler, *Times Books, $25*

At the climax of the movie *Twelve Angry Men*, after two hours of watching a crusading Henry Fonda chip away at an obstinant Jack Warden and 10 others to save an innocent man from death row, it's almost impossible not to cheer. What a wonder democracy is, you think, when the instincts of one ordinary man can force reason to prevail over emotion and prejudice. And for a long time, the movie represented a real, deeply felt national sense that juries—and, by extension, democracy—worked. Late in the action, one juror, a European refugee, muses:

> This is a remarkable thing about democracy. That we are—what is the word? . . . ah, *notified*! That we are notified by mail to come down to this place—and decide on the guilt or innocence of a man; of a man we have not known before. We have nothing to gain or lose by our verdict. This is one of the reasons why we are strong.

Increasingly, however, the front pages—and Court TV—are telling a very different story: More and more jury verdicts are offending common sense by contradicting publicly known facts of the case. We all watched Los Angeles police officer Stacy Koon and four others beat Rodney King nearly to death; yet a Simi Valley jury let the cops walk. Then we all watched hooligans beat truck driver Reginald Denny nearly to death with a brick in South Central L.A.; yet another Los Angeles jury let them off the most serious charges. And daytime TV has never offered better fare than the saga of whether Lyle and Erik Menendez's murder of their millionaire parents was in self-defense; yet the only people in the country who seem to think the boys were defending themselves were sitting in the jury box.

Of course, there are eternal problems with juries. There's always the possibility that one lawyer will be shrewder (and more expensive) than another; that judges won't explain all the legal issues and evidence clearly; and that the affluent and well-educated will opt out of the system.

But in the last 25 years or so, these natural-enough flaws have become worse, leading to verdicts that fly in the face of reason. What, exactly, is going on in the courtrooms and jury boxes around the country? Stephen J. Adler, legal affairs editor of *The Wall Street Journal*, asks this question, and the answers he gives in *The Jury* are an enormous contribution to understanding what's wrong with the system as well as how to fix it. In a tour of recent legal history—or at least that part of it where ordinary people intersect with the courts—Adler discovers gullible jurors; savvy lawyers who play on prejudices with impresario skill; judges who leave panels in the dark about essential details; and, most important, professional jury consultants who, for a price, can tell a lawyer why an Episcopalian is more likely than a Methodist to con-

Daniel Franklin is a Washington writer.

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vict a Baptist.

If you're hunting for the main villain in the jury system, the consultant stands out from the crowd. While trial lawyers in the forties and fifties would get a routine credit report on potential jurors to see what they could find out, jury consulting, nineties-style, is big, big business. (Used to be that everyone was entitled to a lawyer; these days, if you have the cash, a consultant is about as routine.) Using psychology, sociology, and marketing methodologies, a consultant can tell a lawyer which characteristics in a juror reveal subtle prejudices for or against a client's case, and the industry generates well over $200 million a year in revenues. They're earning their keep: One successful Southern California consultant promises a 96 percent chance of a favorable verdict if he's allowed to convene focus groups, advise on strategy, and vet the panel. You can pay jury consultants, for example, to write questionnaires that will reveal consumer tastes, habits, even the cars they drive. That becomes important when, in a drunk driving case, for example, a consultant can tell the defendent's lawyer that the owner of a minivan is more likely to vote to convict than a Porsche driver is. Conclusion: Keep the minivan owner off the jury.

Hiring a consultant is obviously more subtle than slipping a juror a wad of $100 bills, but it is almost as effective and sends the same message: Justice is for sale. If you can afford the consultant's price tag (which can run up to $1 million), you get a leg up on finding a jury that will acquit or prosecute anyone, regardless of evidence. In civil and criminal cases this is an important factor in shifting the balance of power to the rich, undermining the fundamental point of a democratically selected jury: that real people from all walks of life can be trusted to reach the right decision most of the time.

But when consultants start mucking around, that principle crumbles. John DeLorean and William Kennedy Smith had consultants, and acquittals; in the King beating trial, the white cops had one paid for by the taxpayers. In the two Menendez trials, defense lawyers used a consultant to compose a 34-page questionnaire on work history, views on sexual abuse, and the death penalty to test-market their defense during jury selection. Since the boys had already confessed to blowing their parents' heads off one night while the folks were watching TV, getting off the hook depended on convincing the jury that the Menendez father had sexually abused the boys while their mother knew but did nothing to stop it. So the Menendez jury consultants, trying to load the jury with people who might focus more on the sexual charges than the shotgun blasts, asked, "Do you think boys and men would be reluctant to report or even discuss their experiences as victims of sexual abuse?" And another: "Do you think the law of self-defense should be applied equally whether the person killed is a family member or a stranger?"

Not surprisingly, huge corporations pioneered the jury consulting technique. In a 1977 antitrust suit against IBM, defense attorneys turned to USC marketing professor Donald Vinson for help. With IBM's deep pockets, Vinson hired 12 people (similar in socioeconomic background to the 12 jurors) and paid them to come to court each day to listen to both sides. At the close of each day, Vinson would debrief the shadow jurors about which points were hitting home and which were off the mark. A lot of time and effort, to be sure, but IBM was committed to win at all costs.

And win they did. After the favorable verdict, Vinson, impressed by his own success, left academe and opened a consulting firm that in 10 years grew into a $25 million company employing over 100 psychologists, sociologists, and marketing experts. His promotional materials make him sound like an Amway salesman—except he's hustling justice, not vaccum cleaners. Here, for example, is Vinson's pitch on how attorneys should use charts: "Obviously, an exhibit is not perceived on the basis of the message content but rather by a combination of visual stimuli in the graphic display itself. These include color, size, contrast, contour, luminance, depth, movement, pattern, and form. All of these can be manipulated to make a visual display more effective."

The jury consultant's actual power is made possible by a lawyer's right to excuse a limited number of potential jurors without explanation—what is called a peremptory strike. Depending on the case, a lawyer has three to 15 such freebies. So the first solution to fixing what's wrong with juries is defanging the con-

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sultant by abolishing the peremptory strike. (Britain has already done this.) To be sure, a good lawyer who can pick a sympathetic jury will be always with us; the point is that bad verdicts come when there's an imbalance of legal talent or where rich defendants can maximize their chances (in criminal cases, going up against a less-well-funded government prosecution) by hiring consultants *and* good lawyers. So although abolishing peremptories isn't a silver bullet, it's nonetheless a powerful bullet to equalize talent and force trials to be conducted on the merits.

If the purpose of the peremptory, in the words of the Supreme Court, is to "assure the parties that the jurors before whom they try the case will decide on the basis of the evidence placed before them, and not otherwise," it's clearly having just the opposite effect. In fact, if a case is weak on evidence, as was Imelda Marcos and Adnan Khashoggi's in the summer of 1990, a lawyer can use peremptory strikes to choose jurors who will decide on the basis of just about anything *but* the evidence.

The infamous Marcos was on trial for stealing hundreds of millions of dollars from the Filipino people and spiriting it to the U.S. with the help of Khashoggi, the Saudi arms trader. The defense team of James Linn and Gerry Spence handled their peremptories the way Isaac Stern wields a violin bow. Consider Zachary Berman, a 49-year-old with a graduate degree in urban planning who worked for a child-protection agency. Berman, a potential juror, had read about the case in *The New York Times* and knew Khashoggi was reportedly one of the world's richest men. Nonetheless, he had no preconceived notions about the two defendants' guilt and promised the judge he could be impartial. He was intelligent, attentive, unbiased.

He didn't stand a chance. First, he had read the press accounts of the case, which to the defense was a sure-fire indicator of bias. Furthermore, his education showed he had an analytical mind, which was bad news for lawyers short on facts but long on oratory and emotion. (The defense's only hope was to repackage Marcos as a long-suffering woman who knew nothing at all about her late husband's affairs—this despite the fact that the First Lady of the Phillipines used to boast about her power of state and jet-setted around the globe on the backs of one of the poorest populations in the world.)

United Artists Corporation

And Irish-Americans were out because they are too biased toward policemen and prosecutors. Asian Americans were also out, the defense reasoned, because they tend to respect authority and would therefore be predisposed to the government's case. Scientists, engineers, and mathematicians were to be avoided because their analytical minds might pay too much attention to evidence.

So who passed muster? Blacks were ideal, because, the attorneys felt, they are generally more sympathetic to criminal defendants than whites. Men were preferable to women because they have more experience with hell-raising and are therefore more forgiving of it. Fat people were preferable to thin ones, because they have less self-control and would be less insistent on law-abiding discipline. Old people were better than young, because they better understand human frailties.

The defense found the perfect juror in Rochelle Gore, a 29-year-old computer operator.

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Her qualification? Total ignorance. Gore indicated on a juror questionnaire that she had never heard of either of the defendants even after the well-publicized revolution that drove Marcos (and her 3,000 pairs of shoes) from Manila in 1986 and Khashoggi's role in the Iran-*contra* scandal—a claim so unbelievable (reminiscient of the search for 12 people who had never heard of Oliver North) that the presiding judge wanted to make sure.

> Judge: You said that you never heard of someone by the name of Ferdinand Marcos. Now that you have been to court and you have heard me introduce some of the people in this case, I just want to ask you again: Are you sure?
> Gore: Yes, I have never heard of him.
> Judge: Never?
> Gore: Never.
> Judge: Have you ever heard of a man by the name of Adnan Khashoggi?
> Gore: Never.
> Judge: Have you ever heard of a lady by the name of Imelda Marcos?
> Gore: Never.
> Judge: Do you think you saw either of them on television ever?
> Gore: I have never seen them on television before.

Linn and Spence could barely contain themselves.

How successful were their selections? Eleven days after the jury acquitted both Marcos and Khashoggi of all charges, Marcos threw a party atop her ritzy New York apartment building, the Dag Hammarskjold Plaza. More than 200 guests were treated to roast pig, wine, dancing, and a belly dancer. Marcos even belted out "Feelings," her signature song. And the guests of honor, sitting at a special table on a dais at the head of the room, were none other than 10 of the 12 jurors who had set Marcos free. Of the woman the Filipinos call the "Iron Butterfly," one juror said, "I can't get over what a simply lovely person Mrs. Marcos is."

Although the loss of peremptory strikes won't completely level the playing field, it would hobble jury consultants, which is the first step toward restoring sanity to the jury system. But jury consultants will retain some power even if peremptories are abolished. How? Because judges now have—and should retain—the power to excuse prejudiced jurors "for cause." The danger here, however, is that lawyers, using information gleaned from consultants, might convince judges that "cause" includes not just real cases of bias but also frivolous factors such as, in drunk driving cases, keeping minivan owners off the panel. And knowing *something* about a case should not be the sole cause for excusing a juror. Ninety five million Americans watched the O.J. Simpson drama in June and so could presumably be disqualified if Simpson's lawyers—like Marcos', Khashoggi's, and North's—successfully argue that knowing anything about the case is ground for excuse. The key thing is for the trial judge to make sure jurors aren't prejudiced—and being an informed person doesn't equal prejudice.

Of course, there are justifiable cases for "cause" excuses. For example, say a black defendant is on trial. Questioning a potential juror, the defendant's lawyer discovers the juror was once a member of the KKK. Clearly, it's reasonable for the lawyer to move, and for the judge to grant, that the man not be seated on the jury.

The point is for judges to be alert to how the "cause" challenges are made, to grant them only in the justifiable cases, and not to let themselves be manipulated by consultants. (Lawyers will argue that if only judges interview potential jurors—as happens in some federal trials—then lawyers will have no way to root out concealed prejudices. Fair enough. The answer is not to keep the current system, which too often is abused, but to ensure that lawyers can interview all potential jurors in all trials and let the judges decide who stays and who goes.) This would help prevent Marcos-like verdicts and inject some common sense into the process.

An equally important problem is the way college-educated and wealthy people shirk jury duty. In the 1974 Watergate-related John Mitchell-Maurice Stans trial, slightly less than half of the 196 potential jurors called had some college education. After exemptions were made for personal hardship, prejudice, and the attorneys' peremptory strikes, only one seated juror had any higher education.

And then there are the broad automatic exemptions made on account of profession. In New York, for example, lawyers, physicians, clergymen, dentists, pharmacists, optometrists, psychologists, podiatrists, nurses, Christian Scientists, embalmers, firemen, and sole business proprietors are all let off the hook. The result is that many of the best possible jurors are being left off panels.

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This is not to say that the more education a person has the better a juror he will be. But allowing whole swaths of society to escape jury duty, regardless of which segments they are, undermines a basic principle of the jury system: A wide selection of people will bring a breadth of experience to a given case. Getting rid of automatic exemptions is essential. Of course, a primary job for the system has to be getting responsible jurors, and the way to do that is not, as some argue, through property tax records, which would only give us people of a certain economic affluence, but through voter registration rolls. By registering to vote, people indicate a minimal civic interest, and we don't want people who don't even bother to vote sitting on juries, which is, in many cases, a tough and demanding job.

No matter who ends up in the jury box, it's critical that judges make sure jurors understand what's going on. This is intuitive—about as obvious as the fact that Perry Mason is going to ferret out the truth by the end of each show—but consider a cigarette case from 1989. The Liggett company, maker of brands such as Eve and Chesterfield, sued rival Brown & Williamson, maker of Kool and Viceroy, for allegedly artificially lowering its prices.

Liggett's suit was based on the Robinson-Patman Act, which bars companies from charging some customers less than others if the intent is to run a rival out of business. After *seven months* of testimony, including several days during which Robinson-Patman was explained in detail, the jurors decamped to make their decision. As they began, one juror asked, "What's the Robinson-Patman Act?" No one in the room could answer. So the jurors turned to the judge's written instructions, which are supposed to clarify matters. They didn't. "The outer boundaries of a product market are determined by the reasonable interchangeability of use or the cross-elasticity of supply and demand between the product itself and substitutes for it. The average variable cost test is a double inference test because if you find that Brown & Williamson priced below its reasonably anticipated average variable cost, you may infer that Brown & Williamson had predatory intent. . . ."

Understandably in the dark, the jurors—none of whom had advanced beyond high school—based their verdict on which side's attorneys seemed less condescending.

When a judge's instructions read like VCR programming directions, the judge is usually writing for a different audience than the one in the jury box. Appellate courts can—and do—overturn verdicts if the trial judge's instructions don't follow the precise wording of the law, and judges hate being overturned. Hence a dependence on confusing legalisms.

The solution, of course, is clear use of English. But in the judicial culture, which reveres precedent, it takes unusually courageous judges to break the mold. There are a few. In one recent sexual assault trial in Phoenix, Judge B. Michael Dann gave the jury a set of crisply written instructions *before* the trial began. It included a description of the law, how it applied, and specifically what evidence had to be delivered to warrant a guilty verdict. And just as the trial wound down, Dann distributed another concise memo that addressed issues that had come up during testimony.

There are other ways, too, to make sure jurors know enough to reach a good verdict. In a 1990 case against Johnson & Johnson in which a tampon was blamed for a woman's death from toxic shock syndrome, Judge Warren D. Wolfson allowed jurors to ask questions after each witness' testimony, a practice forbidden in most courtrooms. As long as the jury asks those questions through the judge—that is, by writing them down and letting the judge decide whether they're valid—this is an eminently sensible reform. When Wolfson tried it, he allowed 27 of 40 proposed queries to be asked. "They were good, sensible questions," the judge said later.

Adler's analysis and his proposed solutions deserve a wide audience. Long ago, de Tocqueville watched American juries in action. "Obliging men to turn their attention to other affairs than their own," he wrote in *Democracy in America*, "rubs practical selfishness, which is the rust of society. . . . I think that the practical intelligence and political good sense of the Americans are mainly attributable to the long use that they have made of the jury." Here's hoping we pay enough attention to forcing the legal system to change that soon we'll be able to click on Court TV and have the same reaction. □

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The Book of Dan

Dan Quayle wants to be taken seriously. His book demonstrates why that isn't likely

BY WALTER SHAPIRO

Standing Firm
Dan Quayle, *HarperCollins, $25*

Like anyone with an ounce of self-awareness who writes about politics for a living, I have a lot on my conscience. No other area of mainstream journalism offers such freedom to savage reputations with clever adjectives, adroit put-downs, blind quotes, armchair psychiatry, artfully telling anecdotes, and the mindless (often consciously cruel) pursuit of the trivial.

In January, while covering Bill Clinton's trip to Russia, I stumbled across a sad-eyed Gary Hart in the lobby of Moscow's Metropol Hotel looking like Banquo's ghost. As I heard myself call out, "Excuse me, Senator Hart," I felt a twinge of guilt over all the ridicule I had heaped on him in the wake of Donna Rice. Back in 1987, I was covering presidential politics for *Time* magazine and I believed that Hart was too weird, too much of a loner, and too impressed with his own intellect to serve as an effective president. The Bimini twist on the good ship *Monkey Business* provided the frame to turn Hart's bent for self-destructive behavior into a tabloid tragedy. So I joined the media lynch mob, gleefully shouting, "Let's string him up ourselves, his kind ain't worth a fair trial." Looking back on it, I cringe over my complicity in driving this capable, albeit deeply flawed, man completely out of public life. Why must Hart remain forever stigmatized in an amnesiac political culture that could so easily rehabilitate Richard Nixon?

Reading Dan Quayle's inadvertently revealing autobiography reminds me that there remain savage journalistic moments that I do not recant. Just staring at him on the cover in a frat-boy sweater, radiating bland good looks under the title, *Standing Firm*, made me want to giggle.

I was in New Orleans for the 1988 Republican National Convention, and afterward I wrote the *Time* cover story on Quayle's near-miraculous elevation. Six years later my attitude regarding Quayle is straight Edith Piaf: "*Non, je ne regrette rien.*" Then as now, I take pride in having gotten away with snide sentences like, "Quayle radiates the same bumptious enthusiasm, the same uncritical loyalty, the same palpable gratitude, and the same malleable mind-set that George Bush brought to the GOP ticket in 1980." Why do I shed a belated tear over Hart, while the plight of this oft-derided, out-of-power Hoosier second banana leaves me completely dry-eyed?

That question—writ large for the entire national media—is at the core of Quayle's seemingly ghostwritten book. Like Charlie Brown of the 1950s rock song, the former vice president seems to be constantly asking, "Why is everybody always picking on me?" All I can give is my own personal answer.

Quayle, by chance, had come to a breakfast interview with *Time* on the morning of his 1988 selection; with embarrassingly maladroit news judgment—augmented by the after-effects of a night on the town in New Orleans—I overslept and missed the breakfast. Listening to the interview tape afterward, I discovered Quayle's answers were a nonstop string of banalities, even in light of his awk-

Walter Shapiro, a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly, *is White House correspondent for* Esquire.

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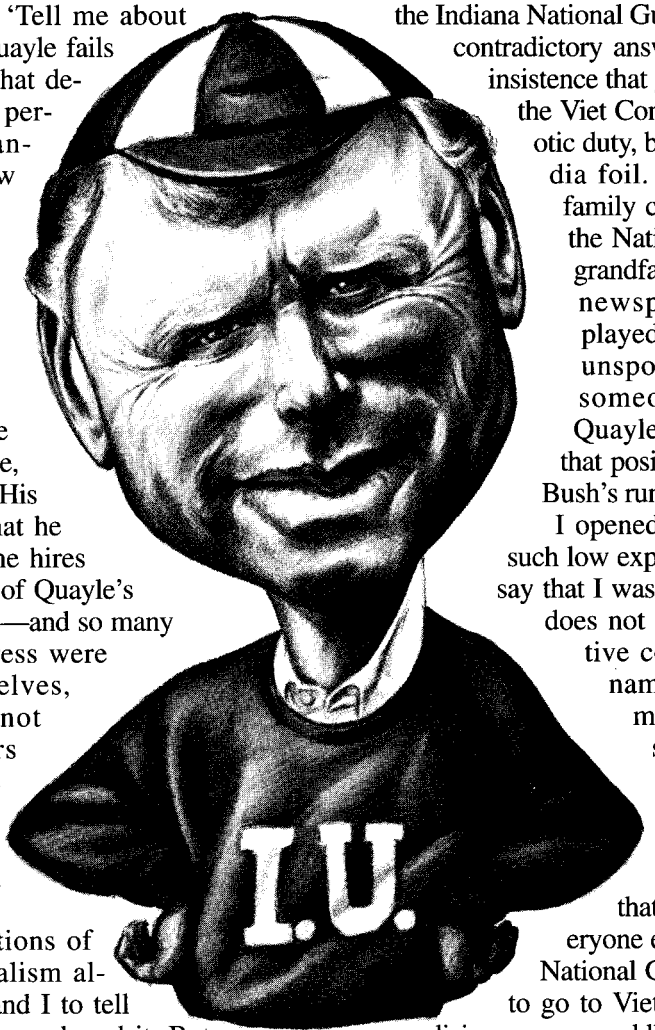
ward position as a vice-presidential wannabe still waiting for the word from Bush. Quayle's new book makes clear what happened next: "On the night of August 16, hundreds of newspeople in New Orleans were asking any acquaintance of mine they could find, 'Tell me about Dan Quayle.'" What Quayle fails to understand is that what destroyed his reputation permanently were the answers that my fellow reporters and I received. I remember a Republican operative, who had worked closely with Quayle on the Job Training Partnership Act—the nominee's lone legislative achievement—telling me, "He's blond and dumb. His only saving grace is that he knows he's dumb, so he hires good staff." The shock of Quayle's selection was so intense—and so many Republicans in Congress were rightly asking themselves, "Why him, and not me?"—that reporters were treated to the rarest commodity at a political convention: total candor rather than authorized spin.



If only the conventions of quasi-objective journalism allowed my colleagues and I to tell our readers the truth as we heard it. But there was no way *The Washington Post* would run a banner headline that read, "Bush Lights on Dim Bulb." Blind quotes—and no Republican was self-destructive enough to tell the truth on the record—can only carry you so far. Crucial issues like Quayle's basic intelligence are deemed far too subjective for standard news coverage. Frustrated by the constraints of its profession, the press pack reacted in time-honored fashion—Quayle's initial press conference was a feeding frenzy waiting to happen. All it took was one callow answer about his National Guard service ("I did not know in 1969 that I would be in this room today, I'll confess") and the witch-hunt was on. Instead of tricky interpretive questions (Quayle's fitness for high office), the media mob was back in its comfort zone of trying to ferret out objective facts (how Quayle wangled a wartime billet writing press releases in the Indiana National Guard). Quayle, with his contradictory answers and his stubborn insistence that guarding Indiana from the Viet Cong was a solemn patriotic duty, became the perfect media foil. His apparent use of family connections to get into the National Guard (Quayle's grandfather owned the largest newspaper in the state) played right into the larger unspoken issue: How did someone as callow as Quayle win the Senate seat that positioned him to become Bush's running mate?

I opened *Standing Firm* with such low expectations that I cannot say that I was surprised that Quayle does not make a single reflective comment on his Vietnam-era service and the media frenzy it spawned. About the closest he comes to honest revisionism is his grudging one-sentence admission that "Yes, I knew like everyone else that by joining the National Guard I was less likely to go to Vietnam." But the rest is disingenuous muddle. Take his statement that "in 1969 almost *nobody* supported the war, myself included." His reason: "Like many in my generation, I supported the goal of preventing a communist military takeover in Southeast Asia, but I became opposed to the way the war was being conducted by the Johnson Administration." Earth to Dan Quayle: Richard Nixon, whom you claim to revere, was president for all but 19 and a half days in 1969, not Lyndon Johnson.

Nor does Quayle ever come clean about the financial cushion and political power bequeathed to him by his maternal grandfather, the right-wing newspaper publisher Eugene Pulliam. Instead, we

Jay Lincolin

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get the Quayle version of "I was born in a log cabin that I helped my father build." Again and again, he depicts the Quayles as a hardscrabble family just barely making ends meet on his salary as a senator and Marilyn's earnings as a lawyer. One story in the book has Marilyn asking one of her husband's handlers for money to pay for a babysitter so that she could attend a campaign event on Ellis Island, and there is also Quayle's self-pitying revelation that he has no pictures of Election Night 1988 because the chintzy Bush campaign would not pick up the tab for a photographer.

A gullible reader would be sobbing by the time Quayle confesses his financial difficulties during the Reagan-Bush transition, having already resigned his Senate seat to give his successor more seniority. "I was not the $600-million man," Quayle writes, referring to the common media estimate of the Pulliam family's net worth. "I was a senator living off my salary, and I had a mortgage payment to make. So I asked the president-elect if I could go onto the transition office's payroll for a few weeks. After all, I was working every day to get my part of the new administration ready for its duties." What Quayle sees as a noble sacrifice was, in truth, a neo-Dan Rostenkowski penny-ante hustle. For elsewhere in the book—in a swipe at the media for not writing about Lloyd Bentsen's wealth—Quayle reveals that his own "net worth in 1988, including my house, was $854,000." Maybe that's not Pulliam rich, but it should be enough to cover babysitters, photographers, and a few mortgage payments during the transition.

Okay, I'm being mean, but Quayle provokes it. The book's tone is a relentlessly chatty, friendly, wide-eyed view of the world as seen through Dan Quayle's eyes. Try as he might, he can't escape the petulant small child's anger that everybody else is getting away with things and he's not. Describing the maddening constraints of by-the-book Secret Service protection, Quayle notes, "I was never permitted to resume my old habit of jogging on the Washington Mall"—and then adds—"something I see Bill Clinton has managed to do!"

Quayle, I suppose, deserves credit for the cheerful fashion in which he tries to tell the full story of each of the verbal miscues of his vice presidential tenure. But this near-encyclopedic recital ended up reminding me of near-forgotten Quaylisms like the speech in American Samoa where he told the crowd that they looked like "happy campers." Sure, some of these press flaps were unfair and Quayle has a right to wail, "Do you know how many favorable stories it takes to overcome one zinger by Johnny Carson?" But the non-stop Quayle gaffe watch was the media's only way of sending a coded message: "Hey, folks, he's now a heartbeat away from the Oval Office—and he's not getting any smarter."

Quayle tries to remedy his personal gravitas gap—a chasm roughly the size of the Grand Canyon—by offering up a breathless chapter about how he singlehandedly saved Cory Aquino from a 1989 coup. Because George Bush and Jim Baker were on Air Force One en route to the Malta Summit when the reports of a military revolt in the Philippines arrived, it was Quayle (yikes!) who got to play Al Haig in the Situation Room. The vice president had the good sense to follow the prudent advice of Colin Powell to permit the U.S. Air Force to show the flag in support of Aquino but to avoid actual combat with the rebels. All in all, a seemingly competent performance. Still, it is painful to read Quayle's self-congratulatory assessment: "I think everyone who was in the Situation Room that night would agree that they have rarely done more concentrated and effective work."

But one little-noted section of the book actually made me pause and wonder if my glib image of Quayle the Lightweight wasn't a bit of a caricature. The chapter was certainly not inserted to boost sales since it concerns the vice president's statutory role as the chairman of the White House Space Council. I must confess a small deviation from neoliberal orthodoxy: I have a sneaky love of manned space travel and can't understand why America has not returned to the moon in a quarter century and why we may not get to Mars in my lifetime. A 1950s childhood spent reading science fiction makes strange bedfellows, so Quayle and I are in celestial harmony when he writes, "I knew the only thing that would again excite the American public. . . was a revival of wonder in the idea of sending people to *explore* space, not just orbit around and around in it."

This visionary notion—and here we're veering close to Ronald Reagan territory—meant that Quayle became the bitter adversary of the gang-that-couldn't-launch-straight bureaucrats at NASA, who have turned the agency into an endless subsidy program for the ill-starred space shuttle. Quayle's battles with NASA have a this-is-how-it-is-in-government immediacy that the rest of

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the book lacks. During one chilling meeting, the NASA team was fighting to ward off much-needed competition from the Defense Department and retain control of the next phase in building a space station. The Pentagon alternative would be ready by 2003, but NASA was prepared to tell Congress that they could do the job themselves by 1999. Congress would, of course, opt for the earlier date, and NASA would win the turf battle. There was only one pesky problem: NASA knew that their target date was as phony as a Dick Darman budget document. So Quayle listened incredulously as William Lenoir, a top administrator at NASA, confided at a meeting, "Well, we could *tell* Congress 1999 but really plan to launch in 2003. After all, we might blow up an engine. In fact, we *could* blow up an engine."

The NASA episode illustrates what should be called the Quayle Paradox: How do you react when the wrong person does the right thing in government? Too much praise, and you're elevating Quayle despite your deeply held qualms. Willful silence plays into the self-destructive notion that everything is political—that personalities matter, not issues. I suppose I could wiggle out of this conundrum by pointing out that Quayle, to be sure, does somehow hire good people; his vice presidential chief of staff, Bill Kristol, was—aside from New Paradigm idea maven Jim Pinkerton—about the only creative political thinker in the Bush White House. (I know this sounds like faint praise, akin to calling a legislator "the conscience of the Congress.") Kristol—and, yes, Quayle—deserve lasting credit for the vice president's bold attack on the legal profession before the American Bar Association in 1991. Reading about that speech created in me a troubling bit of cognitive dissonance: What was I doing cheering for Dan Quayle? The truth is, for all his obvious limitations, Quayle does boast excellent big-picture political instincts. He always remembered the Reagan lesson, totally lost on the Bush crowd, that the purpose of governing is to do, not simply to exult in being there. As the book makes clear, he sensed from the outset that the sleepy status-quo-plus 1992 Bush campaign was headed for disaster.

The "Murphy Brown" flap underscores the contradictory nature of the Quayle legacy. Yes, the vice president was right to point out the social implications of the alarming explosion of illegitimate births. And Murphy's enceinte state was fair rhetorical game, even though I wonder about Quayle's insistence that "the reference was my idea." When the firestorm erupted, how could you not sympathize with Quayle when White House Chief of Staff Sam Skinner complained to him that everyone was "worried it looks as if you're indirectly criticizing Doro Bush." (Doro Bush's beautiful blonde daughter was used in soft-focus 1988 campaign ads to illustrate Bush's fidelity to family values and love of his grandchildren. Small wonder mean-spirited Democrats reveled in Doro's subsequent divorce.) Yet there was also something comically, alarmingly out of touch when Bush confessed to Quayle, "The problem I have is that I've never seen 'Murphy Brown.'" You could just hear the gasp on Bush's side of the conversation when Quayle in turn confessed, "Neither have I. I haven't seen the show."

Just when I began to fear that I might, in Margaret Thatcher's phrase, "go wobbly" on Quayle, the lexicographically challenged former vice president obligingly rehashed the "potatoe" episode. About the only revelation is Quayle's claim that afterward Marilyn—supposedly the brains in the family—was "unsure herself (and Marilyn *is* a good speller) that the word didn't have an *e* after all." C'mon Dan, you still don't get it. Egregious moments like this become embedded in the national psyche because they illustrate something real—the yawning gaps in your education. (There must be a reason why Quayle has refused to release his college and law-school transcripts.) The press—for all the justifiable hand-wringing over the excesses of pack journalism—does play a valid role in vetting candidates for high office. I, for one, don't want a president who when told about genocide in Rwanda thinks his aides are referring to the girl in the Beach Boys' song who's supposed to "help me get her out of my heart." Even in these latitudinarian times, there are things that a would-be president simply ought to know.

Though *Standing Firm* is on the best-seller lists, I doubt it will help Quayle save his reputation. In the age of the handlers and non-stop spin cycles, it says something laudable about the good sense of the American voters that Quayle left office much as he arrived—as a national joke. The Hoosier heartthrob does have his virtues, and the NASA story illustrates them. But *Standing Firm* is too flaccid a book to make me feel that I ever misjudged Dan Quayle. □

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Political Booknotes

The New Republic Reader: Eighty Years of Opinion and Debate
Dorothy Wickenden, editor
Basic Books, $28
By Mark Feeney

George Orwell made no secret of his frequent irritation with the *New Statesman*—which in fact didn't keep him from declaring his even greater irritation over the occasional Saturday when it failed to arrive in his mailbox. Not a few of us feel the same way about *The New Republic*. It is maddening, wayward, obstreperous. . . and more or less indispensable. With its commitment to the world of ideas as well as the realm of public policy, *TNR* holds a unique place in our national discourse. For all that readers may lament the magazine's often snarky tone and two-decade-long creep rightward, they have no other recourse if they want a generally liberal weekly journal of opinion. (*The Nation*? Like *National Review*, it is ultimately about ideology, not politics. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, or, for that matter, a good thing. But it *is* a different thing.)

This is the fourth anthology of selections from the magazine, the others having appeared on the 20th, 50th, and 60th anniversaries of its founding 80 years ago this November. The magazine began in 1914 as a beacon of Progressivism, a last monument of the Age of Reform. The twenties and thirties saw its growing radicalization—or quasi-radicalization. With the coming of the Depression, *TNR* seemed to falter. It was at once too conservative for those increasingly Marxist times yet too fellow-traveling to serve as a true liberal alternative. Even more problematic was the magazine's opposition to U.S. involvement in World War II—surely a consequence, at least in part, of its ardent support of entry into World War I. Having Henry Wallace as editor for a brief period after the war only made things worse. More significant, the emergence of *Partisan Review* during the forties, the newfound seriousness of *The New Yorker* under William Shawn during the fifties, and the arrival of *The New York Review of Books* in the sixties meant the back of the book came to suffer eclipse as the front had.

There were two key dates in shaping *TNR* as we today know it: 1950, when it moved from New York to Washington; and 1974, when Martin Peretz bought the magazine. The move emphasized the magazine's orientation toward politics and its sense of newsiness, attributes that would distinguish *TNR* as other "serious" publications found themselves increasingly subject to the academicization of intellectual life in postwar America. Yet at the same time, the arrival of Peretz—besides bringing in fresh blood and new money—helped bolster the magazine's always-strong connections to academe. Himself a member of the Harvard faculty, Peretz opened a pipeline to Cambridge that both enhanced relations with the professoriat and—more significant—brought a steady stream of bright young editors and reporters who have helped the magazine maintain a sharp (sometimes too sharp) rhetorical edge over the past two decades. Of course, one might argue that in doing so Peretz was simply following tradition. As Dorothy Wickenden notes in her introduction to the *Reader*, *TNR* editors have tended to be "primarily young men from Harvard unhindered by self-doubt."

In theory, a *TNR* anthology could double as a shadow history of 20th-century liberalism—or, more to the point, *TNR*'s idea of what such a shadow history might be. Certainly, the *Reader* boasts a glittering compendium of names—Rebecca West, Randolph Bourne, John Maynard Keynes, Bertrand Russell, Winston Churchill (with a cable marking the first anniversary of FDR's death), W. H. Auden, John Dewey, John Dos Passos (famously proclaiming, "Hoover or Roosevelt, it'll be the same cops"), Margaret Sanger, Gunnar Myrdal, Lewis Mumford—but it's the names themselves that do most of the glittering, rather than what they've written. For that matter, the most famous item in the *Reader*, Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" appears under question-

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able pretenses. It ran in Cyril Connolly's *Horizon* two months before its *TNR* publication. Compounding the offense, the *Reader* reprints only half the essay (when it ran in *TNR*, it did so in two parts).

The most memorable pieces tend to come from lesser lights. Jean Daniel's interview with Castro includes his receiving the news of John F. Kennedy's assassination. "This is bad news," he says three times, and one almost expects to hear a cock crowing. Leon Wieseltier on the Holocaust Museum is at once magnificent and maddening (oh, what a high horse that man can ride, especially when, as is often the case, he's right). Alexander Bickel's tough-minded, and darkly prescient, uncredited editorial on *Roe v. Wade* remains as pertinent today as when written 21 years ago. And Charles Merz's account of Warren G. Harding running for president, "The Front Porch in Marion," remains as deadpan devastating as it must have been at the time. Taylor Branch is eloquent on the observance of the first Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, and Michael Kinsley's 1984 anatomization of the role of "the gaffe" in presidential campaigns (a gaffe being something that "occurs not when a politician lies, but when he tells the truth") is as amusing as it is insightful.

The anthology does not shrink from showing the magazine in a bad light. Bruce Bliven's "Letter to Stalin" might qualify for a thirties version of *TNR*'s current feature, "Suck-Up Watch" ("It is in one sense a real tragedy for the world that you, with your remarkable abilities and intelligence, should never have traveled outside the borders of the USSR"). At the other end of the political spectrum, the 1986 editorial, "The Case for the Contras," argues for military aid to the Nicaraguan opposition with a Blivenesque obliviousness, most egregiously so when it declares that "The future of Central America hinges on [the contra aid vote's] outcome." A 1960 editorial hailing JFK's nomination asks with brush-cut earnestness, "And why not a Taste Cultivation Program?" (One is hard pressed to decide whether those capital letters are more terrifying or hilarious).

As thankless tasks go, anthologizing is the literary equivalent of balancing the federal budget: For every item included, scores more—or, in this case, hundreds—get left out. And that leaving-out means an all-the-harsher scrutiny for whatever makes the cut. It is only proper, then, to salute Wickenden, a former *TNR* managing editor and now *Newsweek*'s national affairs editor, for fighting the good editorial fight.

Yet even granting that she could provide, in her words, only "a tiny and skewed sampling" here, the anomalies are striking. She has arranged the book by category rather than chronology. The first section, "The New World Order: 'After the Revolution,'" includes everything from Virginia Woolf on the movies to Ronald Steel on Kissinger's memoirs; as two such disparate items suggest, this section is grab-baggy, at best. The next section focuses on America, which is followed by a grouping on that most vexing of American dilemmas: race. The anthology concludes, suitably enough, with a category bearing the none-too-edifying title, "Fights." (The subtitle "What Do the Liberals Hope For?" does try to cast things in a rosier light.)

In her lengthy introduction, Wickenden never addresses her criteria for inclusion. Intrinsic excellence? Importance to the magazine's history? Representativeness of the debates or issues? What's good here can be very good, and what's bad is rare. Still, there's an awful lot of material that would appear to have been included simply for the sake of name-dropping. Worse, though, are the exclusions. There's nothing here from America's greatest living journalist, Murray Kempton, a *TNR* editor in the mid-sixties; or from Sidney Blumenthal, whose reporting of the '84 presidential race revitalized campaign coverage. And only two pieces come from Richard Strout, who so gracefully manned the TRB column from 1943 to 1983, and just one from John Osborne, whose "Nixon Watch" columns put him in the very front rank of commentators on that most commentated-upon of men. We get Tom Geoghagen on the relationship between the 1972 Democratic platform and the Port Huron Statement rather than far more notable efforts by him on labor or the culture of American Catholicism. Otis Ferguson, who was enlivening the magazine with pop-culture criticism two decades before anyone realized such a thing even existed, does not appear. Perhaps most perplexing of all, Edmund Wilson gets the same number of bylines (two) as Wieseltier. This for the man who, during the twenties and thirties, lent more distinction to *TNR* than any writer in its history.

Of course, Wilson soon enough found himself chafing against the magazine's restrictions of space, of reach, and of ideology. Something similar is going on in the *Reader*. Amid all the variousness is a consistent, wearying tidiness. It's not, to be sure, a tidiness of belief (no collection that contains both Andrew Kopkind and Charles Krauthammer can be accused of that), but instead a tidiness of aim—that aim being the attempt to capture in one not-so-small book the nobly lurching march of 20th-

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century liberalism. Or as the Basic Books catalogue rather grandly puts it, "a composite portrait of the development of twentieth-century liberal ideology." Well, part of what makes the magazine so refreshing is its obvious inability to contain within its covers the loose baggy monster that is liberalism.

It's not that Wickenden has done her job badly. But this is a curiously leaden birthday present to a confoundingly lively magazine. The best monument to *The New Republic* is still the rather flimsy one that comes in the mail every Saturday—or, if you live where I do, every Monday or Tuesday. It's all very irritating: both the publication and its postal delivery. Orwell would have understood.

Mark Feeney is editor of The Boston Globe's *Focus section.*

The Haldeman Diaries

H. R. Haldeman

Putnam, $27.50

By Walter Pincus

It is almost impossible to get an unvarnished look at an American president in action, particularly in this age of television and public relations. The press, instead of presenting reality, promotes the image handed to it, whether favorable from supporters or adverse from critics.

There is, however, one exception: Richard Nixon. The simple explanation for this is that his is the only White House whose presidential papers (and tapes) were seized by the government before there was a chance to remove the most embarrassing material.

A case in point is *The Haldeman Diaries*. Almost every day for four and a half years, Nixon Chief of Staff H.R. (Bob) Haldeman met with the president and carefully took notes on conversations that went on for minutes or hours and that ranged from the future of the lira to the choice of wine for state dinners.

Haldeman's handwritten notes, which run to 1,000 or more yellow legal pages, have been on file in the government-controlled Nixon archives outside Washington for years. But the newly published *Diaries* provides a vastly more convenient way of gaining access to those Nixon conversations—a record of the way the Oval Office works that may never again be matched. That's a real loss to the American political system.

Democracy, of course, is a nasty, chaotic business, and the Oval Office is where it all gets played out day after day. Almost every entry in the *Diaries* could have made the front page of *The Washington Post* the next day. There is hardly a major event from the Nixon years that this book doesn't illuminate in some way. Certainly it highlights the Nixonian traits we have learned to hate over the years—the verbal putdowns of blacks, for example, and his nervous fear of liberal Jews, especially those in the media.

But there are also ground-zero insights into how Washington really works, how bureaucrats and courtiers act when the cameras are gone and they think no one is paying attention.

Everyone will have his own favorite passages. I'll cite just two. The first is Haldeman's version of what went on behind the scenes when the decision was made, in April 1970, to launch what became known as the "incursion" into Cambodia.

As Haldeman portrays these events, which would have a lasting, disastrous effect on millions in that still-troubled Southeast Asian country, Nixon and Henry Kissinger were euphoric as they planned the surprise attack.

"As [Nixon] followed K[issinger] into the [National Security Council] meeting, he turned back to me with a big smile and said, "K's really having fun today. He's playing Bismarck."

For the two days that follow, we are told that Nixon's two other top foreign policy advisors, Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, balked at the president's invasion plans. The reasons, as Haldeman describes them, are worth noting. Rogers' "real problem was his testimony this afternoon on [Capitol] Hill. He doesn't want to say we're sending United States troops into Cambodia, but he can't say otherwise. . . without lying, which he won't do (President agrees)."

Laird's concern is described as sheerly bureaucratic. "Laird not really opposed. . . but very upset about" a document that makes Kissinger's shop "responsible for implementation [of the invasion], says that must be Secretary of Defense responsibility."

Summing up the meetings that day, Haldeman wrote: "P[resident] made clear he understood basis of both Rogers and Laird in meeting. Rogers playing against any move, in reaction to Senate, establishment press, etc. Laird trying to figure P's position and be with it, without his prerogatives cut. K[issinger] pushing too hard to hold control."

That's a real White House at tough decision time.

My second favorite entry comes from November 1972, after Kissinger, in a famous interview with Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, took sole credit for the opening to China. According to Haldeman, Nixon "obviously is extremely displeased. . . . He later in the day told me I should let Henry know that obviously the EOB [Nixon hideaway office] and the Oval Office and the Lincoln Room have all been recorded for protection, so the P has a complete record of all your conversations. . . "

Walter Pincus is a reporter for The Washington Post.

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"inviting." "excellent."

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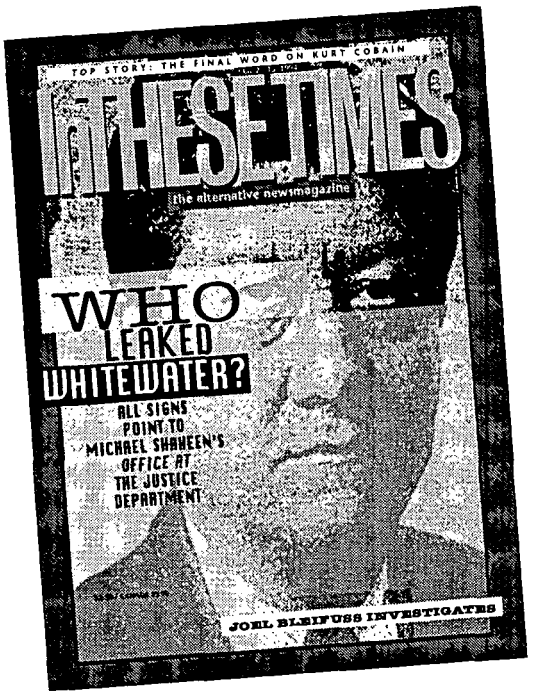

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